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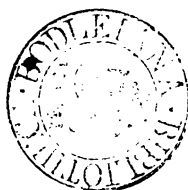
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ANCIENT MONASTERY OF THE MONKS OF MELROSE.

Published by Smith, Elder & Co. London.

THE HISTORY OF THE  
POLISH PEOPLE

FROM THE POLISH OF

ADAM MICKIEWICZ,

BY D. CATTLEY.



*When I was young, but now I am old,  
I have seen many things, and I have  
seen many things, and I have  
seen many things, and I have*



# KONRAD VALLENROD;

An Historical Tale,

FROM THE

PRUSSIAN, AND LITHUANIAN ANNALS:

TRANSLATED FROM THE POLISH

OF

ADAM MICKIEWICZ,

By H. CATTLEY.



---

*Victrix causa Dñs placuit, sed victa Catoni.*

---

Ah! is there here but one who dares to own  
A Litvan soul!—come hither, and sit down  
With me beside a nation's funeral bier,  
With me to muse, to sing, to shed a tear.

---

LONDON:  
SMITH, ELDER AND CO. CORNHILL.

1841.

969.

**LONDON :**  
**PRINTED BY STEWART AND MURRAY,**  
**OLD BAILEY.**

## NOTICE BY THE TRANSLATOR.

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THE means which the English public possess of knowing anything about the modern literature of Poland are very limited.

The Slavonic languages are something strange to us ; while the Gothic, of which the German is now the most important representative, is allied to our own.

Of late, however, and especially since the keen interest excited by the political struggle of 1830, a portion of the public curiosity has passed over the favourite field, Germany, and settled upon Poland, and there has appeared a growing dispo-

sition to search into this new store-house of contemporary literature.

To this some admirable articles in the Foreign Quarterly Review, have greatly contributed, where portions of the Poem "Dziady" have been given with great accuracy and spirit, together with a few passages from our present subject Konrad Vallenrod. It remains to be seen what amount of treasure the new researches are likely to discover. In the meantime the Poles have not been idle, nor wanting towards us, for all the most admired of Lord Byron's works have been translated into Polish; and, in these labours, we may add to the name of Mickiewicz, those of Odyniec and Ostrowski. Nor should we, in this place, omit to make known, that the Poles share, with the Germans, their full appreciation of the beauties of our Shakspeare, of whose entire works there are, at this moment, in progress, two translations into Polish.

These facts alone seem to call for a return, on our part, of greater amount than has yet been

made, and may form an excuse for those whom chance has led into the field, if they are induced to hazard something in the cause.

In this spirit the present publication is given ; with what success, and how far entitled, under the circumstances, to be looked upon with indulgence, is left to the judgment and decision of the public.

It is probable that in Poland, and particularly in Lithuania, the events of which our story treats may be matter of familiar knowledge, or, at least, as well known there, as the principal events of English history are to us ; but, to the English reader, who is not before-hand provided with such preliminary information, it must be confessed, the development of our story may be rather obscure. There are, moreover, some expressions of extreme simplicity, and figures borrowed from the habits of life of those primitive times, or from peculiar habits and circumstances, existing even at the present day, which might seem to present proper matter for elucidation.



But, in this slight attempt to interest the public in a novel subject, it has been thought sufficient, to confine the explanatory remarks to a simple translation of the preface and notes of the original, which are here given entire, and it is hoped that with the assistance of these, the story may be sufficiently understood to be found interesting.

Something, perhaps, may be added to its appearance of reality, by the recollection that the names recorded in our tale, are those of places and localities still existing.

The small River Vilija, and the town of Kiejdany, are laid down in our modern maps under those names. On the former, Vilna, the capital of Lithuania, is situated, and Kiejdany may be found a short distance to the north of the confluence of the Vilija with the Niemen.

Kovno also exists, and if our guide-book travellers would deviate from their beaten track, they might still tread its "lovely valley;" and even now, the traveller, bent perhaps on other schemes, when he crosses the Vistula on the high road at

Marienwerder, may, if he has read our tale, listen, perchance, with greater interest than the present writer did twenty years since, when the postilion pointed through the shades of evening to some distant towers, and pronounced the word, Marienburg.

It would be useless to say more than what has already been urged as an apology for the present translation, which must stand upon its own merits, and suffer the penalty, whatever that may be, of its own defects. We may notice only, by way of explanation, that the word Litva, which is found throughout the narrative, is from the Polish, and is adopted in preference to the modern inconvenient and lengthy designation, Lithuania.

We have already thought it right to intimate to our English readers, whom we could not suppose to be all well acquainted with Poland, that Adam Mickiewicz is a living author ; and, we may add, that he is a great favourite with his countrymen, who seem to have adopted the sentiments of patriotic devotion recorded in this poem, as pecu-

liarily characteristic of their own feelings. And this is remarkable ; for the first edition of Konrad was published at St. Petersburg, where Mickiewicz at one time resided.

It might be expected, perhaps, that we should, in this notice, give some further particulars of our poet's history, which would, indeed, present abundant matter of interest ; but the events of his life, or of that of any living author, could hardly be entered upon, with propriety, by the pen of a stranger. Neither is there any necessity for it in this case, because a memoir of Mickiewicz has already been presented to the English public, in the *Athenæum*, (No. 561, July, 1838,) from the able pen of his countryman, Stanislas Kozmian.

It is sufficient to notice here, that his literary attainments have at last found their due reward : he has received the appointment of Professor of Slavonic literature in the University of Paris.

We occasionally find incidental reference to this Lithuanian war, in English authors. Hume (quoting Walsingham, page 343,) represents

Henry Duke of Lancaster, in 1399, as having just returned from fighting against those unfortunate pagans ; and, we may imagine, that to take part in that expedition was considered an element of the fashionable education of those days ; as it was, about the time of Louis XIV., “to trail a pike”\* on some rampart in Flanders.

Our great northern novelist also, seems to have considered, that the events of which our Poem treats, must have continued to interest the times that succeeded them, for he represents the unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots,† while a prisoner in Loch Leven Castle, as delighting in the Chronicle “*La Mer des histoires*”—which, he states, treats of this war.

We may further notice the account which another modern author‡ gives of these transactions, connecting the war with the history of the religious sect of the Flagellants, and quoting

\* Evelyn’s Memoirs, vol. i. page 12.

† See “The Abbot.”

‡ The Rev. Geo. Waddington—History of the Church, p. 505.

his authorities. He says,—“ It appears that in the year 1351, a number of those pitiable enthusiasts were collected in Lithuania, in the exercise of their absurd practices.

“ Pope Clement VI. proclaimed a holy war. The Master of the Teutonic Order marched in person against them; and after a solemn fast, and public prayer, that God! would aid him, in the extirpation of his enemies, for the glory of his holy name, he assaulted them, and massacred eight thousand; the remainder, about two thousand more, were carried away captives into Prussia, that they might be restored by a second baptism to the bosom of the Church.”

But we may suspect, that among those eight thousand victims, were many innocent Lithuanians, for whose slaughter, ample vengeance, as our tale relates, was afterwards taken upon the Teutonic Order.

## PREFACE.

---

THE Lithuanian nation, composed of the races of Lithuanian, Prussian, and Letts, small in number, established upon a territory neither of great extent nor very fertile, was unknown to Europe until about the thirteenth century, when, by the incursions of its neighbours, it was provoked to more active operations. When the Prussians\* were sinking under the arms of the Teutons, Lithuania, issuing from her forests and morasses, devastated with fire and sword the surrounding countries, and soon became formidable in the north.

The annals still do not sufficiently explain, by what means a nation so weak, and for a long time doing homage to foreign dominion, suddenly became able to defend itself, and to menace all its

\* Prussia was at that time composed only of that small district marked *Prussia*, in the maps of Poland.

enemies; on one side carrying on a continued and murderous war with the Teutonic Order; on the other plundering Poland, levying contributions about Novogorod, and extending itself to the shores of the Volga, and the peninsula of the Krimea.

The most brilliant epoch of Lithuania occurred in the times of Olgerd and Vitold, whose power extended from the Baltic to the Black sea; but so great a dominion, rising too suddenly, was not able to effect within itself that internal strength necessary to give union and vigour to its several parts. The Lithuanian nationality, extended over lands too widely spread, lost its peculiar character. The Lithuanians enslaved many Russ\* tribes and entered into political relations with Poland. The Slavonians, long since Christian, had attained a higher stage of civilization, and although threatened or assailed by Lithuania, yet

\* By Russ, is here meant the districts called White Russia, and Red Russia, provinces of Poland. Russia was at that time called Muscovy.

by gradual influence, recovered their moral superiority over a powerful, but barbarous oppressor, and, as in the case of the Chinese and their Tartar assailants, the invaders became, as it were, swallowed up in the nation they invaded.

The Jagiellons, and their more powerful vassals became Poles. Many Lithuanian princes upon Russ territory, adopted the Russ religion, language and nationality; by this means the great Dukedom of Lithuania ceased to be Lithuanian, and the proper nation of Lithuania found itself reduced within its former boundaries: its tongue ceased to be the language of the court and of the nobles, and was preserved only among the people. Lithuania presented the singular spectacle of a people who vanished in the greatness of their own conquests; as a stream, after a great overflowing, sinks, and runs in a narrower channel than before.

Already several centuries have passed over the events here mentioned: From the scene of political existence has disappeared both Lithuania and



her most cruel enemy the Teutonic Order. The relations of the neighbouring countries have entirely changed : the interests and passions which lighted up that war are extinguished, and even popular tradition has not preserved their memory. Lithuania is now altogether a thing of the passed. In this respect her annals present a favourable subject for poetry, in as much as the poet, celebrating the events of those times, is occupied with matter purely historical—with studying his subject in a way to give it the form of art, without being obliged, in order to support its interest, to appeal to the passions or habits of his readers.\*

It is precisely such objects which we are directed to select by the Poet Schiller.

“ Was unsterblich im Gesang soll leben,  
Muss im Leben untergehen.”

“ Things must no more to life belong  
Ere they immortal live in song.”

\* Mickiewicz had doubtless good reasons, which it is not necessary for us to enquire into, for thus disclaiming the intention of addressing any sentiment contained in this Poem to modern times.—Note by the Translator.

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## **THE INTRODUCTION.**



## THE INTRODUCTION.

A HUNDRED years since the dread Order—  
The Teutons—crossed the Northern border,  
Deep in Pagan blood to wade :  
Each Prussian son his neck has laid  
Beneath the yoke ; or, with his life  
Alone, has fled the hopeless strife :  
And now the German tracks his path,  
Towards Litva's\* bounds with chains or death.

The Niemen stream with friendly flow,  
Parts Litva from the coming foe.  
Here many a glittering temple's height  
Adorns the land ; each sacred site,  
Deep 'mid the shade of murmuring woods,  
That shroud the dwelling of their Gods.

\* Lithuania.

There, to the wondering Pagan's eyes,  
With brow half buried in the skies,  
Fixed on a hill, the Cross divine,  
Of German power the threatening sign,  
Seems grasping Litva's outspread plain,  
Within its new mysterious reign.

Here Litva's youthful warriors stand,  
Their shoulders bear the bow ; their hand  
The ready darts ; the leopard's hide  
Supplies their helm ; the bear's rough side  
Their coat of mail : they line the shore,  
The foe's dark import to explore.  
And there, in helm and armour bound,  
The mounted German keeps his ground,  
All motionless ; his eager sight  
Fixed on the opposing rampart's height ;  
A matchlock rude, and rosary, share  
By turns his thoughts and heedful care.

Both watch the passage : So, no more  
May Niemen glory as of yore,

The boast of peace and friendly ties,  
Uniting both her boundaries ;  
For now she flows a stream of death,  
To all who cross her watery path ;  
And chains await them, or the grave,  
Who the forbidden waters brave.  
Only that Litva's hop-plant throws,  
Towards where the Prussian poplar grows,  
Her twining arms, and, kindly stayed,  
By water-plant and willow's aid,  
Springs with her garland's graceful bands,  
To meet her love, who bending stands  
Beyond the river's hostile bound.  
Only the nightingale's sweet sound,  
From Kovno's woods, bears notes of love  
Unchanged, to where his brethren rove,  
On the Zapushchian hill ; or borne  
On Freedom's wings, invites return  
Of Friendship, on that common isle,  
Where lingering peace yet seems to smile.

And men?—the fiercest wars divide ;  
Prussia and Litva, once allied,



Now banish to forgetfulness  
Their ancient love : but love will press  
Fond hearts together.—Two I've known.

Oh Niemen ! shortly rushing on  
Across thy waters, ranks shall pour,  
That death and fire sweep before ;  
And from thy shore respected long,  
The garlands green, so wildly hung,  
The axe shall tear ; the horrid jar  
Of cannon's thunder echoing far,  
Shall scare the nightingale away.  
All that kind nature would essay,  
In her fair golden chain to bind,—  
All this, the hate of human kind,  
Of man to man, shall burst in twain ;  
But lovers' hearts unite again,  
In the Vajdelote's\* undying strain.

\* The ancient bards of Lithuania were so called.

## THE ELECTION.



### THE ELECTION.

FROM Marienburg's high tower, resound  
The pealing bells; while echoing round,  
The cannon's roar proclaims afar,  
Mingling with the drum's rude jar,  
'Tis the Teutonic festal day.  
From every side, in long array,  
The knights approach their chapter seat;  
There, in solemn circle met,  
(The Holy Ghost invoked their guide)  
The assembled council shall decide  
Who on his breast the cross may wear,  
Who in his hand the sword may bear,

Great symbols of the Master's power :  
More days than one saw the long hour  
Of grave debate : for, men renowned  
Alone were in that circle found :  
All equally of lineage high,  
All claiming merit equally ;  
But, by consent of all, the name  
Of Vallenrod, best known to fame.

Though stranger yet on Prussia's strand,  
His glory filled each distant land ;  
Whether o'er Castile's hills he traced  
The flying Moor, or on the waste  
Of waters sought the Ottoman,  
First in the fight his arm led on :  
The first to scale the hostile wall ;  
First, on the Pagan prow to fall :  
In tournament, no sooner seen,  
When, by his vizor raised, that mien  
So known and dreaded met the eye,  
Than every knight all silently  
Shrunk back, for none the strife would dare,  
When Konrad claimed the wreath to bear.

But not on valour's field alone,  
His early years in glory shone  
Mid the Teutonic ranks ; he knew  
The Christian virtues' empire too,—  
Stern poverty, and modesty ;  
And, earthly things passed heedless by.

Konrad ne'er learnt, with flattering tongue,  
The anti-chamber crowd among,  
To smooth the well-turned compliment ;  
Nor yet for sordid lucre, lent  
His arms, to serve the feudal strife  
Of angry barons : his young life,  
By vain allurements unsubdued,  
Had passed in cloistered solitude ;  
Nor could that noblest recompense,  
And grateful most to mortal sense,  
The minstrel's hymn, and beauty's smile,  
His frozen spirit e'er beguile.  
Indifferent to the voice of praise,  
At distance only used to gaze  
On the soft cheek ; his steps would stray,  
Alike, from fair discourse away.

Whether from Nature's hand, he took  
The frozen soul and haughty look,  
Or time had stamped them, who could say ?  
For e'en in his yet youthful day,  
The haggard cheek, and hoary hair,  
Showed years of suffering printed there.  
But moments came, when, with the young,  
He deigned to share their joys among ;  
And e'en to woman's accents sweet  
Would listen, nor disdained to greet  
A courtly phrase with due reply ;  
And scatter, though his vacant eye  
Gleamed cold the while, to fair ones round,  
A thousand words of playful sound.

Rare moments of forgetfulness ;  
For lo ! some word, that could express  
No moving sound to others, came  
Swift to his heart with breath of flame ;  
The name of country, duty, love,  
The crusades, Litva ; these could prove  
A poison quick, to the gay mood  
That seemed to rise on Vallenrod.

---

Then instant turned his face away,  
And that stern look resumed its sway,  
Indifferent to all things around ;  
Again his thoughts communion found  
In mystery deep ; as musing there,  
On such his sacred high career,  
Himself the penance would impose,  
To spurn the pleasures Earth bestows.  
Friendship,—his only solace known,  
A friend,—he knew but one alone,  
Halban, a monk aged and hoar ;  
Sacred the office which he bore,  
But honoured for his virtues more ;  
He Vallenrod's seclusion shared,  
Alone his soul's confessions heard ;  
Alone did Vallenrod impart  
To him, the secrets of his heart :  
Friendship how blessed, most blessed on earth,  
When heavenly feelings give it birth.

Thus seemed to th' assembled knights, the name  
Of Konrad, chief regard to claim.



Yet, guilty with one fault he proved :  
Konrad no worldly follies loved ;  
Konrad no drunken orgies shared ;  
But, in his cell's secluded ward,  
When weariness his spirit pressed,  
Or sad remembrance wrung his breast,  
He sought his troubled soul to quell,  
By the red goblet's treacherous spell.  
A change then o'er his features broke,  
That face severe and pale, then took  
A flush of feverish crimson hue ;  
And those eyes, once of ample blue ;  
Where years had now their dimness cast,  
Glowed with the fire of days long past.  
His breast then uttered plaintive sighs,  
The softened tear bedewed his eyes,  
His hand would seek the lute, his tongue  
In strains unknown poured forth the song, —  
Unknown, but not less formed to impart  
Deep meaning to the hearer's heart.  
Enough — such tomb-like tones to hear,  
Enough—to mark the singer's air :

Upon his face the traces lie  
Of deepest searching memory ;  
The arching brow, the straining gaze  
Bent earthwards, as intent to raise  
Some mystery from the depths below :  
Whence may that song's strange accents flow ?  
Doubtless, in thought his youth he traced,  
Through the abyss where sleeps the past ;  
Where is his soul ?—in memory's land.

But ne'er could music's charm command  
A tone of gladness from his hand.  
The faintest smile he seemed to fear  
As mortal sin,—each chord you hear,  
By turns, beneath his fingers sound,  
Except the chord where joy is found ;  
All feelings may the listener share,  
Except that hope is banished there.

At times the brethren, too, have seen  
That frenzied air, and altered mein,

As chance uncalled has led them there,  
And marvelled much such strains to hear ;  
Then Konrad roused, with angry gaze  
Throws down his harp ; quickly he stays  
His song, while loud his lips are heard,  
To utter forth some impious word.

Something in Halban's secret ear  
He whispers ; dreams of armies near,  
Issues command, or seems to throw,  
Fierce menace to some unseen foe.  
The brothers half in terror wait,  
Old Halban there meantime has sat,  
His gaze, intent with mystery,  
Deep plunged in Konrad's roving eye ;  
A piercing look, cold and severe ;  
Yet some deep eloquence is there :  
Summons he memory ?—or perchance  
Counsels he something ?—or that glance,  
Has it some sudden fear aroused,  
Within the breast of Vallenrod ?  
Instant, his gloomy brow is clear,

His eyes' quick fires no more appear,  
Calm and indifferent is his air.  
Thus, at the circus' festal state,  
When dames, and lords, and knights are met ;  
The lion's guardian stands prepared,  
To loose him from his chamber barred ;  
The trumpet gives the sign before ;  
The royal beast, with horrid roar  
From his deep throat, spreads sudden fear  
Amid the crowd. One only there,  
The keeper, views him undismayed ;  
His hands across his breast are laid,  
But with the eye, he gives a blow  
That lays the savage nature low.  
Great talisman of the immortal mind,  
That thus irrational brute force can bind.

## II.

FROM Marienburg's high tower, the sound  
Of pealing bells still echoes round.  
Now, from council chamber passed,  
The knightly circle comes at last  
Within the chapel. There, with the Prior,  
The knights and chaplains crowd the choir,  
The vesper prayers their mute devotions claim,  
And to the Holy Ghost they chaunt the solemn  
hymn.

## HYMN.

Spirit, Light divine,  
Dove of Sion !  
This day, the christian world to own,  
Upon the earthly subjects of thy throne,  
Deign with thy presence visible to shine.

O'er Sion's brethren now thy wings extend :  
The Heavens rend  
With rays of light :  
And his head, who, in thy sight  
Most worthy seems,  
Let thy bright beams  
Joy-shedding, with a golden garland crown.  
We, sons of men, then bowing down,  
Will fall before the face of him,  
On whom shall beam,  
Radiant with light, thy sheltering wings.  
Son our Saviour ;  
By the all-powerful motionings  
Of thy sovereign hand,  
Say, who of these  
Most worthy is,  
Marked with thy passion's sacred sign to stand ;  
With St. Peter's sword, who shall command  
The armies of thy faith,  
And to the eyes  
Of Pagan enemies,

The standard of thy kingdom wide display :  
And may each son of man bow heart and head,  
Before him from whose breast the cross shall shed,  
As from a star, its sacred ray.

The service ended, respite brief  
Is granted by the Prior chief:  
But, when reposed, they must repair  
Again within the choir, in prayer  
To ask, that God would deign to light  
The mind of chaplain, brother, knight,  
For the election's sacred right.

Their spirits seek repose and ease,  
In the refreshing midnight breeze.  
Some in the terrace gallery sit,  
Others the castle boundary quit,  
And through the varied garden stray.  
'Twas a silent night of balmy May ;  
Afar just gleamed the rising day.  
The moon, in wandering journey driven  
Across the sapphire plain of Heaven,

Her eye in varied changes seen,  
As now a dark, now silvery screen  
Of cloud obscured her ; just had laid  
Her silent solitary head :  
So when in some sweet solitude,  
The lover has in thought reviewed,  
As tracing all life's circle o'er,  
His hopes, his joys, his sufferings there ;  
Now tears he sheds, now gladness finds,  
At length, upon his breast inclines  
His weary head, he forward bends,  
And dreamy lethargy his musing ends .

Thus do the knights the time beguile :  
The Arch-Prior no moment wastes the while,  
But Halban, and other chief brothers there,  
He calls apart,—thence they repair  
Far from the curious crowd, to give  
Their counsel, and his will receive.  
The castle left, he gains the plain ;  
There long discoursing they remain,  
Heedless of path or guiding way,  
Till chance conducts where open lay



The peaceful lake's extended shore.  
Now rising morn warns them once more  
To seek the city :—but,—they stand,—  
Some voice,—whence floats it o'er the strand ?  
'Tis from that corner tower,—again  
Intent they seek to catch the strain,—  
'Tis she !—'tis the recluse they hear.

Within that tower, the tenth long year,  
Still dwells a pious maid unknown ;  
From some far land she came alone,  
To find St. Mary's city there.  
Whether 'twas Heaven inspired her  
With that sad purpose, or the pain  
Of sullied conscience' secret stain  
Urged peace, by penance, to attain ;  
She sought that solitary gloom,  
And found in life a living tomb.

Long time the priests refused assent,  
But to her prayers at length relent,  
Conquered by their imploring power,  
And grant the asylum of the tower.

Scarce she the sacred threshold passed,  
When, at the entrance door, they cast  
Of stones and earth a cumbrous load,  
That close her to her thoughts and God :  
And those stern doors that bar her way  
From living men, at the last day,  
Angels alone shall tear away.

At a small grated window there,  
At times some food, a meagre fare,  
The pious passing people lay.  
There too the breeze and rays of day  
Kind Heaven supplies : poor sufferer !  
And has this world so pained thine eyes,  
And wearied thy young soul, that now,  
Thou fear'st the sun and smiling skies ?  
For, at that window, since the hour  
When first she chose her burial tower,  
No eye has seen her form appear,  
To bathe her lips in the sweet air,  
Or gaze upon that prospect fair,  
The splendour of the serene heavens ;

Or, on the earthly plain around,  
Where grateful flowers adorn the ground,  
Or, hundred times more dear, to find  
The cheering looks of kindred kind.

Only 'tis known that she lives on,  
For, oft a voice with softest tone,  
Has made some holy pilgrim stay  
A moment on his nightly way,  
While wandering there his path along ;  
Doubtless some fragment of pious song :  
And when from Prussian hamlets near,  
At evening-tide assembled there,  
The children round the neighbouring wood  
Are sporting,—there they oft have stood,  
To mark some white and shining gleam  
Within that window,—as might seem  
Aurora's early morning beam :  
Or, is it a lock of her amber hair,  
Or her snowy hand that glistens there,  
Blessing those heads so innocent?  
Thither his steps the prior bent,  
And heard these words from the tower sent.

“Konrad!—Oh God! their doom is come,  
“Thou shalt be master, to consume  
“Their hated strength, and lay them low;  
“But can they fail thy traits to know;  
“In vain to hide: though, like the snake,  
“’Twere thine a changed form to take,  
“Still in thy soul unchanged would be  
“Thyself,—for, such e’en rests in me:  
“After thy burial shouldst thou rise,  
“Thee, still would Teutons recognize.”

The voice the listening brothers hear,  
And gazing towards that window, there  
The form of the recluse they see:  
Forward she bends, and earnestly  
Her stretching arms point towards the ground,  
To whom?—’tis desert all around,  
Only from far there strikes a beam,  
Such as from glittering helm might gleam,  
And o’er the earth a shade of white,—  
Is it the mantle of some knight?

Now it is gone;—doubtless it shone  
But in the eye's illusion;  
'Twas but Aurora's blushing ray,  
As mists of night give place to opening day.

“Brothers,” said Halban, “thanks be given  
To Heaven! for the decree of Heaven  
Has surely hither been our guide;  
Those words prophetic shall decide  
The Chapter's choice, did you not hear  
The name of Konrad strike the ear;  
Konrad,—the name of him renowned,  
(Whose fame in every land is found),  
Of Vallenrod,—here let us stand,  
Brother to Brother pledge the hand  
And knightly word,—to-morrow, he  
Alone, shall our Grand-Master be.”

They go with cries, and far along  
The vale, their voices bear the song  
Of joy and triumph;—Let him live,  
Konrad, the Grand-Master live,

The Order live to latest day,  
Be Paganism swept away !

Halban, in thought profound remains ;  
With deep contempt he hears those strains  
From the rejoicing crowd ; his eye  
Is cast towards that tower's sad mystery,  
And turning thence, his path along,  
Some tones he murmured thus in song :

## THE SONG.

Vilija, mother of our streamlets,  
With thy bed of gold, and aspect blue,  
The Litvan maid who draws thy crystal water  
Has heart more pure, and cheek more fair than you.

Vilija, through Kovno's lovely valley,  
'Mid flowers of tulip and narcissus flows,  
Our Youth's best flower, bows to the Litvan maiden,  
Blooming more fair than tulip or than rose.

Vilija despises the valley's flowers,  
But seeks the Niemen, well beloved, to find,  
The Litvan maid in her own land grows weary,  
For on a foreign youth is fixed her mind.

The Niemen in its powerful arms,  
Bears to the rocks and to the ocean wide,  
His loved one, pressed upon his wintry breast,  
And both together perish in the tide.

And thee, a stranger too, has carried,  
From thy home valley, Litvan maid forlorn,  
And thou 'mid waves of dark oblivion sinking,—  
But, sadder still,—must all alone be borne.

To the heart and the stream are useless warnings,  
The maiden still loves on, and Vilija's stream will  
    flow,  
Vilija disappears 'mid her loved Niemen's waters,  
The maiden in gloomy tower sinks into years of  
    woe!

## III.

WHEN the master with lip the book had pressed,  
Where their sacred laws recorded rest,  
The prayer had ended, and in his hand,  
The symbols of his high command,  
The sword and cross, the Prior had laid :—  
He raised his head with pride ;—yet weighed  
A cloud of sadness on his brow ;  
Some mystery he may not avow  
Glanced in that look, whose lowering shewed,  
'Twas joy, half mixed with rage that glowed,  
And o'er his face there passed the while,  
That guest so rarely seen,—a smile ;  
But fitful, like the lurid ray  
That transient parts the cloud of morn ;  
A herald of the rising day,  
An omen of the coming storm.



The master's ardour, his eye of fire,  
With courage and hope their hearts inspire ;  
Combat and booty already rise,  
In vision vain to their eager eyes,  
While full of vengeance, a rich flood  
In thought they shed of pagan blood.  
Who shall against such power prevail,  
Nor at his sword his menace quail.  
Tremble, Litvans, the cross divine  
Soon upon Vilna's walls shall shine.

They hope in vain,—days, weeks are flown,  
A whole long year in peace is gone :  
Litva threatens, but Vallenrod  
Unworthily has still withstood  
The call for war,—will neither go,  
Nor succour send against the foe.  
And if he deign to rouse at last,  
He changes quite the system past,—  
The sacred laws that once were known,  
So says he, to disuse are grown ;

The holy vows the brothers swore  
Are kept inviolate no more ;  
Be prayer our duty, treasures of earth  
Are nought to us. In virtue's path,  
And peace, alone he glory sees ;  
Fasting and penance he decrees ;  
Forbids all pleasures, will prevent  
Each solace the most innocent,  
Pursues the slightest sin or word,  
With dungeon, exile, or the sword.

Meantime, the Litvans now no more  
At distance passing, as before,  
Far from the gates, are nightly found,  
To burn the villages around,  
The peasantry unarmed to slay,  
Or, with rude violence, drag away.  
While the scared children of the land  
Upon their parents' threshold stand,  
To hear with dread, instead of scorn,  
The clang of Samogitian horn.

When was a better time for war ?  
Litva, that inward troubles tear ;  
The unquiet Lach, the intrepid Russ,  
The Krimean Khans around that press,  
And bear her bravest sons away.  
Vitold, by Jagiellon from his throne  
Cast down, seeks the protecting stay  
Of the great Order, and will own,  
By treasure, and by ceded land,  
The service of the Teuton band ;  
But hitherto he seeks, in vain,  
Some favor for his suit to gain.

The brothers murmur, the council meets,  
No master there th' assembly greets :  
Old Halban hastens, and searches round,  
But, in castle, in chapel, no Konrad found.  
Where is he ?—doubtless by that old tower,  
His nightly steps the brothers have traced,  
And 'tis known, when darkness 'gins to lower,  
By night's dun shade the world embraced ;  
Forth Konrad goes, and wanders wide  
Along the lake's deserted side,

Or on bent knees is seen to fall,  
Leaning against that tower wall :  
In mantle wrapped, till morning light :  
Like marble statue to the sight,  
His form gleams from afar, nor fails  
His watching eye, nor sleep assails.  
As the recluse discourse supplies  
In accents low, will Konrad rise  
And whispered response give. No ear,  
From far, the murmur least can hear ;  
But by his shaken helmet's gleam,  
Hands restless, head upraised, 'twould seem  
Too plain, that some discourse is there,  
Which may no common import bear.

## SONG FROM THE TOWER.

Who my sighs shall number or my tears ? —  
Have I wept through so many years ? —  
Is it so bitter in my heart, mine eyes,  
That the cold grating rusts beneath my sighs ?  
My falling tears pierce thro' the frigid stone,  
As though 't were the soft heart of pitying man.

In Sventorog Castle burns the eternal fire,  
Nursed by the pious priests' continued care :  
The spring on Mendog mountain ceaseless flows,  
Fed by the driving storm and winter snows :  
To me, no source supplies my sighs, my tears,  
And yet my heart, mine eyes, perpetual sorrow  
sears.

By father's and by mother's love caressed,  
A splendid castle, a rich county blessed  
By nature's smiles : nights tranquil as the day,  
And free from dreams that scare repose away ;  
Peace such as angels know, by day and night,  
Watched me, like guardian spirit hid from mortal  
sight.

Three daughters fair we round our mother grew,  
And I the first Love's fatal accents knew.  
Oh ! days of youthful happiness, how blessed !  
Who waked my soul from that unconscious rest ?  
'Twas thou, fair youth, why did thy words unfold,  
Things, that in Litva's land had yet been left un-  
told.

Of an Almighty God ! of angels bright,  
Of stone-built cities, where, 'mid faith's pure light,  
The splendid domes repeat the people's prayer ;  
Where princes bend each maid's commands to hear,  
Valiant as our own native knights in war,  
Tender no less in love, as our young shepherds are.

Where man, his earthly covering laid aside,  
Soars with his spirit thro' the joyful skies :  
Ah ! I believed, because, within my heart,  
That heavenly life I felt thy words impart.  
Since then, let good or evil lot be given,  
I dream of thee, I dream alone of thee and Heaven.

I joyed the cross upon thy breast to see,—  
A sign methought of future bliss to me :  
In vain,—when from the cross the thunder flew,  
Darkness and silence closed upon my view ;  
Yet nothing I regret,—tho' left with grief to cope,  
True thou hast taken all, yet thou hast left me hope.

---

Hope, with echo low, replied,  
The lake's wild shore, the valley's side ;

Konrad aroused, horridly smiles,  
Where am I?—who that here beguiles  
With hope?—and why that song?—too well  
I of thy happiness could tell.  
At home ye were fair daughters three,  
And Love's regards first fell on thee....  
Woe! woe! ye beauteous flowers,  
Into the garden's joyous bowers,  
A viper horrible has crept,  
And where its gliding breast has swept,  
There dies the grass, the roses fade,  
And its own yellow hues are shed!  
Fly back in thought, and think upon  
Those days, whose course might still have run  
In peace, when . . . . Art thou silent,—here  
Let thy song curse me, and each tear,  
Whose fearful burning prints the stone,  
Let not its drops be spent in vain;  
I will unloose this helmet's band,  
Here let them fall, my brow to sear,—  
Here let them fall, for I can bear!  
I wish to know in time before,  
What waits me on hell's dreadful strand.

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## VOICE FROM THE TOWER.

Oh ! pardon me, my love, my fault I own,  
But tardy com'st thou to thy loved one lone,  
And weary were the hours to wait for thee,  
Some childish song I sung, quite thoughtlessly ;  
Forget that song ;—for ought I to repine ?—  
'Twas but a fleeting moment thou wast mine ;  
Yet, that one moment, I would not exchange  
With the vast crowd upon the earth's wide range,  
For a still life of tedious quietude.  
Thyself hast told, how men of common mood,  
Slumber ignoble their low life away ;  
Like shell-fish in the slime, that see the day  
Scarce once in the long year, when wintry storms  
Expose to light their miserable forms,  
One sigh, one gasp perchance, tow'rds heaven they  
    strain,  
Then back return into their graves again.  
For such low happiness I was not made,  
While yet a life of peacefulness I led,  
In my own land, surrounded by the throng  
Of gay companions ; e'en their sports among,



Some one I languished for, in secret sighed,  
And felt unquiet gush my heart's quick tide.  
Oft from the country's even plain I fled,  
Till, on the highest hill my footstep staid,  
Ah ! said I, would those larks my prayer attend,  
And each from out his wing a plume would lend,  
With them I would depart, and, from this hill,  
One humble flower alone my hand should fill,  
The flower "forget-me-not,"—then would I fly  
Above,—above,—and, in that purer sky  
Where clouds obscure no more,—to pass away :  
Thou heard'st me, and on eagle wings hast flown,  
Monarch of birds, to bear me for thine own :  
What have I now from the poor larks to pray,  
Whither to fly,—after what joy to rove,  
Who once have known a mighty God ! above,  
And a great soul on-earth have found to love.

## KONRAD.

Greatness !—still will my angel dream  
Of greatness !—greatness !—by whose gleam  
Betrayed, in misery here we groan :  
Some days our hearts must suffer on,

Some days, but few nor long to run ;  
Then let it be,—in vain we mourn  
The past,—we weep,—but, in return,  
Let the foe dread the coming day,  
For Konrad weeps that he may slay.  
Wherefore, my loved one, didst thou quit  
Those cloistered walls, that calm retreat ?  
I had indeed devoted thee,  
Servant of God alone to be ;  
Was it not better to have staid,  
Within that sanctuary's shade,  
And far from me to weep and die,  
Than in this land of treachery  
And wrong, in a sepulchral tower,  
Such lengthened tortures to endure ;  
To see each day in misery rise  
Upon thy solitary eyes,  
And thro' those bars no time can wear,  
To beg for aid ; while I must hear,  
Must see thy long-enduring pain,  
Must stand afar, and curse in vain  
My soul, that yet some feeling can retain.

## VOICE FROM THE TOWER.

If to reproach thou comest, come no more ;  
And though thy lips in earnest prayer implore,  
I will not hear,—now I the window close,  
Again to plunge into my sad repose ;  
There, all unseen, my bitter tears to pour :  
Farewell, my only one, for evermore  
Farewell, and perish ever from our mind,  
The hour, when for me thou couldst no pity find.

## KONRAD.

Then do thou pity shew to me,  
Angel thou art,—and can it be,  
My words to stay thee are in vain ;  
Here, 'gainst this tower I strike my brain,  
And pray by the dying pangs of Cain.

## VOICE.

Oh ! let us then in mutual pity rest ;  
And think, my love, this universe how vast !  
We, two lone beings, on its ample strand,  
Seem but two dew-drops on a sea of sand :

The slightest breath, and from this earth we fly,  
We vanish.—Ah ! together let us die.  
I came not here to cause distress to thee ;  
A holy nun, alas ! I could not be,  
I dared not dedicate my heart to Heaven,  
When all its faith to earthly love was given.  
Willing, within the cloister had I stayed,  
And, of my life a sacred offering made,  
Serving the holy sisters : but, so drear,  
So strange did all things without thee appear,  
Then I remembered, when some years are flown  
Thou to St. Mary's City must return,  
Vengeance to take upon the enemy,  
And our poor nation's great defence to be.  
To one who anxious waits, how long each year ;  
It cannot be, I said, he must appear  
Ere long returned ; and was I not then free,  
When living I would to the tomb descend,  
To seek once more to cast mine eyes on thee,  
Or, at thy side, in death my woes to end ?  
Then I will go, I said, and near the road,  
Some solitary cell be my abode.

Amid the broken rocks, there will I dwell :  
At times, some knight, as near my secret cell  
He passes, may pronounce the much loved name :  
Perchance, 'mid foreign helms, my eye shall claim  
With joy, his well-known symbol; e'en though  
strange

The arms he bear, my heart shall see no change ;  
E'en though with foreign sign he mark his shield,  
E'en though his face a different aspect yield,  
This heart from far shall mark that form beloved ;  
And, when by call of dreadful duty moved,  
Around him blood and desolation roll,  
Thou' all should curse him, there shall live one soul  
Who still from far shall dare to bless his name ;  
Here then, at last, I chose my cell, my tomb ;  
Here in dread solitude my sighs to pour,  
Safe from the profane passing traveller's ear.  
Thou lov'dst, I knew, in solitude to roam,  
My fancy pictured,—at some evening's gloom,  
Perchance, in wandering from the hated throng,  
His steps may stray the lake's lone shore along,  
And with the breeze and waves conversing there,  
He 'll think of me, and then my voice he 'll hear.

Heaven has at length fulfilled my earnest prayer,  
 My song, well understood, has reached thine ear :  
 Time was, I prayed that sleep's delusive power  
 Would yet console me with thy form once more,  
 Tho' dumb and vain :—to-day,—what happiness,  
 To-day, we weep together! . . . . .

## KONRAD.

. . . . . What now avails to weep ;  
 I wept, thou knowest, what time I tore  
 Myself from thee for evermore,—  
 What time I died to happiness,  
 A self-devoted sacrifice,  
 My bloody mission to complete.  
 Now, when success, secure though late,  
 Just crowns my too long martyrdom,  
 When to the wished-for goal I come,  
 When vengeance o'er the enemy  
 Just hovering waits, thou comest to be  
 The spoiler of my victory :  
 For since from out thy sad retreat,  
 Again that form these eyes have met,

Upon the earth's immensity,  
My 'wildered sight alone can see,  
The lake, the tower, the window barred ;  
Around me nought but tumult heard  
Of war ; and, 'mid the trumpet's thrill,  
And clang of arms, I seek the while,  
With anxious and impatient ear,  
Only thy angel voice to hear ;  
When day at length brings evening on,  
In thought the time I would prolong,  
For, by the evening hours alone,  
To me is life's existence known :  
Meantime, my constant long delays  
The Order blames,—for war it prays,  
Asks its own ruin. Halban too  
No rest allows from vengeance due,  
But 'minds me, how I vowed long past,  
Foes slain in heaps, and lands laid waste :  
When his reproach to shun I seek,  
A breath, a sigh, a look, can speak  
From him, to make my soul revive,  
My half-quelled thoughts of vengeance live :

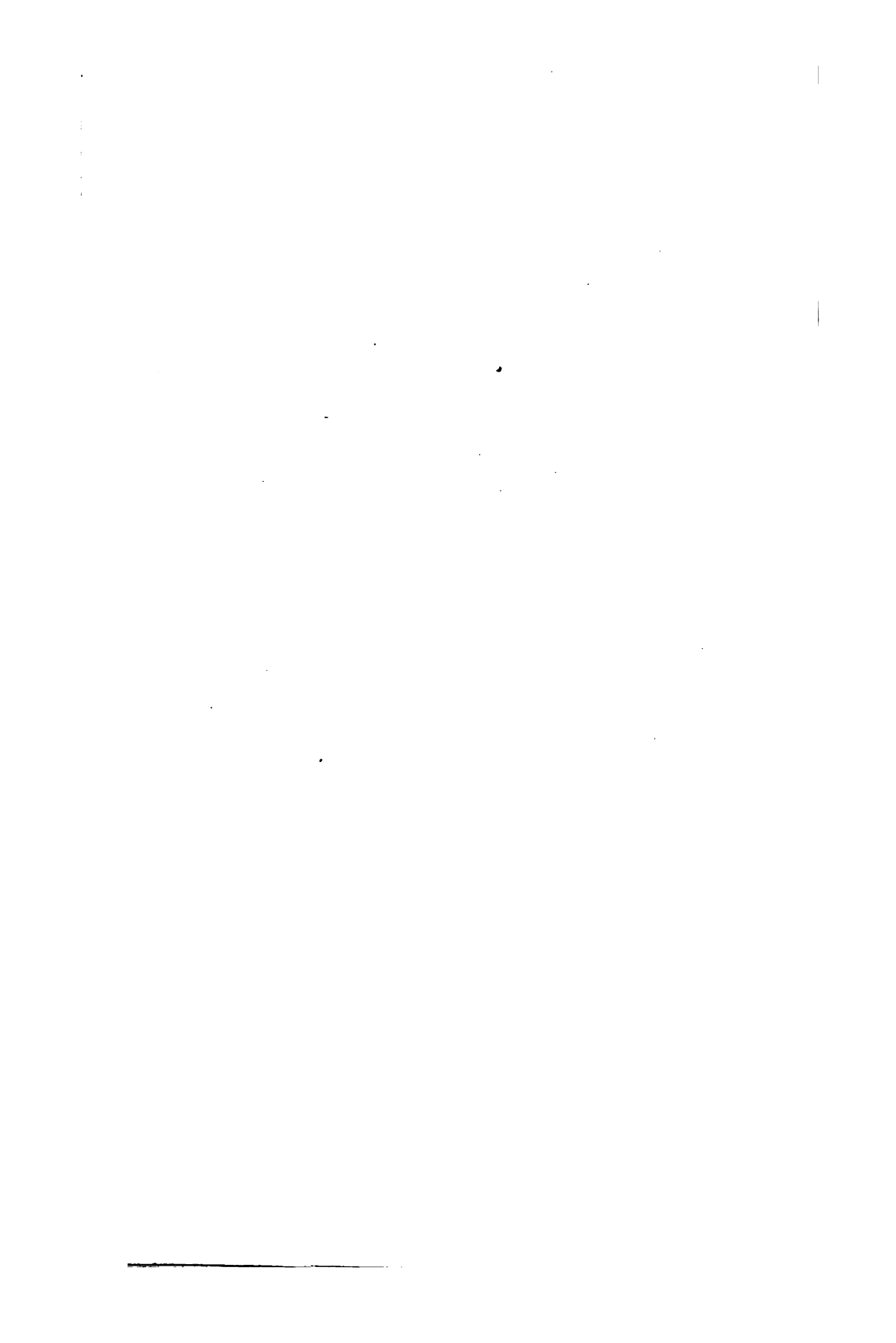
Now seems my destiny's last hour  
Approaching near ; no efforts more  
Can stay the Teutons from the war.  
News came last night from Rome, afar,  
That, from all sides, each land can yield  
A countless crowd to take the field ;  
On me the host incessant calls,  
With sword and cross towards Vilna's walls  
To lead them on ; and yet, no less,  
With shame this moment I confess,  
Though balancing the fate I see  
Of nations, still I think on thee ;  
I frame delays, that time may give  
Yet one day more with thee to live.  
Oh Youth ! how great thy offerings are !  
Yes ! my young days I did not spare,  
But, our dear native land to save,  
Love, joy, and Heaven itself I gave,—  
A mighty sacrifice ; with tears,  
But courage ; and, when gathering years  
Now find me bending 'neath their load,  
Duty, despair, the will of God !



Impel me to the field, yet here,  
With hoary head I scarce can dare,  
From this wall's foot to rend me free,  
And lose perchance yet one sweet word from thee.

He ceased, and from the tower deep sighs  
Alone are heard,—long silence lies  
Then on the passing hours : Night's shade  
Expanding gradual entrance made  
For morning's ruddy beam, whose glow  
The silent waters caught below.  
'Mid leaves still sleeping on the trees,  
Rustles the early freshening breeze ;  
The birds awake with quiet song,  
And then again are still ; and long  
Their silence keeping, seem to say,  
Too early yet we greet the day.  
Konrad starts up,—he raises high  
His brow towards the tower wall ; his eye  
Long on that gloomy window barred  
Is fixed in grief :—a note is heard,—  
The nightingale,—Konrad looks round,  
Morn breaks upon the rising ground ;

Quickly his vizor downward slides ;  
His mantle's fold his visage hides ;  
One movement of his hand, must tell,  
To the recluse a long farewell :  
He vanished in the woody dell.  
So from the hermit's cell, the evil spirit scared  
Flies when the silver tone of matin bell is heard.



## THE BANQUET.



## THE BANQUET.

'Tis their Patron Saint's great festal day ;  
The knights and brothers crowd the way ;  
'Tis to the capital they haste :  
White banners float on every tower,  
Now is come the banquet hour,  
When Konrad must the knighthood feast.

Floating around the table there,  
A hundred mantles white appear,  
On each the long black cross displayed :  
Such were the Brothers, while at hand  
Young equerries, around that stand,  
Their ready fitting service made.

Konrad, the head, directs the feast;  
On his right hand in friendship placed,  
Vitold, beside his warriors, shows,  
No more he joins the Order's foes;  
But, leagued against his native land,  
Unites him with the Teuton band.

But ere the guests may pledge the wine,  
The master gives the solemn sign :  
    " Rejoice ye in the Lord ! rejoice !"  
The cups then glitter, and the sound,  
    " Rejoice ye in the Lord, rejoice !"  
A thousand voices echo round ;  
The silver tankards jingling ring,  
The wine in fountains seems to spring.

On his arm resting, Vallenrod  
Sat listening, in disdainful mood,  
To the unseemly noise they made.  
Sudden it ceased, and in its stead,  
Scarce broken by a whispered jest,  
The clang of the light goblets passed.

“Let us rejoice,” he said ; “but thus,  
My Brothers, is it fit for us —  
For knights, to celebrate their joy,  
First by a loud and drunken cry,  
Then a low murmur ; so, at best,  
Like brigands first, then monks to feast.

“Other the customs I have known,  
'Neath Finland woods,—on hills of Spain,—  
When, round our camp fires careless thrown,  
We pledged the wine 'mid heaps of slain.

“Then there were songs ; but, does this board  
No minstrel—not one bard afford ?  
To glad the heart was wine known long :  
Wine for the mind is found in song.”

Instantly singers numerous rose ;  
A weak Italian first, who chose,  
In strains soft as the nightingale,  
Of Konrad's far renown to tell—  
His piety and valorous deeds :  
Him a young troubadour succeeds ;



A strain of shepherd loves he gave —  
Of wandering knights who dangers brave,  
Maidens from charmed spell to save.

Vallenrod slumbering sat ; the song  
Had ceased its echo to prolong ;  
When, wakened by the failing sound,  
He rose ; a purse of gold unbound,  
And quickly to the Italian cast.  
“ Of me, and of no other guest  
You sing the praise,” he said, “ receive  
The sole reward that I can give,  
And from my eyes depart.”—But next,  
The youth whose bending soul is fixed —  
A faithful troubadour, to prove,  
Servant to beauty and to love!  
“ Pardon me, youth, that in the round  
Of this our circle, is not found  
One maiden, on thy breast to pose  
A simple flow’ret of the rose.  
All roses wither here, then bring  
Some bard who other song will sing :

A monk and knight, the tones for me,  
Should sound as harsh a harmony,  
As ever broke from clang of horn,  
Or from the clash of weapons borne —  
Gloomy as walls of cloistered solitude :  
Fiery as some lone monk in drunken mood :

“ For us, who equal mission find  
To slaughter or baptize mankind,  
A song of death may best proclaim  
Our festival ; and be its aim  
To move, then anger raise—then tire  
With wearying tones, till notes of fire  
Again strike terror 'mid the throng :  
Such is our life, such be our song,  
Who such will sing ? who ? ” — “ I,” replied,  
Quickly, from near the portal wide,  
'Mid equerries and pages there,  
A grey old man ; his garb the air  
Of Litvan or of Prussian showed ;  
Age had its silvery whiteness strewed  
On his thick beard,—while round his head,  
Some wild grey hairs yet waving strayed ;

His brow and eyes a veil obscured,  
His face, by years and suffering seared.

In his right hand a harp he bore,  
The ancient Prussian form it wore ;  
The left he towards the table held  
Extended, and, as though compelled,  
The assembly instant silence made :  
“I sing, but not as once,” he said ;  
“Then, ’twas to Prussians I could sing,  
With Litvans joined,—now slumbering  
In earth they lie,—some who had stood  
In battle field to shed their blood,  
For our dear country :—some could scorn  
To live, and see her body torn  
With dying pangs, but rather chose  
To perish with her parting woes,  
As faithful servants will expire  
Upon their master’s funeral pyre :  
Some seek the woods, base slaves of fear,  
And crouch in silence, others here  
With Vitold now your guests appear.

“ But, after death, Germans, ye know,  
Ask but yourselves, the traitorous crew,  
Infamous in their country’s eyes —  
What shall they do, from sleep who rise,  
In fires eternal to consume,  
When they would call their sires upon,  
In Paradise who rest?—what tongue,  
Their new-adopted sounds among,  
Shall they present, when, anguish-riven,  
They pity seek from sons of Heaven?  
Will these, in barbarous German guise,  
Their children’s language recognise?

“ Oh! children, ’tis to Litva’s shame,  
Not one, not one, with succour came,  
When I, old Vajdelote, that day,  
In German chains was dragged away  
From our blest altars; now, grown old,  
In foreign land, in vain is told  
My charmed song to stranger ears:  
Alas! the singer no one hears:  
Towards Litva’s land my straining eyes  
I spend in tears; and, when arise

The longings for my native home,  
From which side should the breezes come,  
To waft the whispered tokens near,  
I know not; whether here, or there,  
Or from which side they should appear.

“ Here only, in my heart, there rests  
Preserved, all that her sons loved best  
Of their own land, such poor remains  
Of treasures lost my soul retains;  
But take, ye Germans, take from me  
These too, take from me memory.

“ As, at the circus’ public strife,  
When conquered, though preserved his life,  
The knight now feels his honour gone,  
Each tedious day drags on alone  
Despised ; then suddenly, once more,  
Returns to find his conqueror,  
Nerves yet again his arm when met,  
To break his weapons at his feet.

---

“So me, the last desire inspires ;  
My hand shall wake the slumbering wires  
Once more, then from her latest bard,  
Be Litva’s dying accents heard.”

He ended, some reply to wait  
From the Grand-Master ;—silent sat  
The expecting crowd ; with searching gaze,  
And scornful eye, Konrad surveys  
Each look and movement Vitold made.

All as they Vitold’s face surveyed,  
Marked, when the bard of traitors spoke,  
The sudden change that o’er it broke :  
Livid,—then pale,—then reddening high  
By turns, as tortured equally  
With shame and rage, his spirit bowed.  
Suddenly, through the astonished crowd,  
His sabre pressed against his side,  
Dispersing them, a passage wide  
He made, towards where the old man sat ;  
Gazed at him,—sudden seemed to wait,—

Then burst the cloud upon his brow,  
In a full flood of tears to flow :  
Returning, he sat down, his mantle's fold  
Concealed his face,—some mystery untold  
Served long his thoughts in musing deep to hold.

The Germans whisper,—“ Is it fit  
Old beggars to our feast to admit ?—  
Who, when he hears, will understand  
This song ?”—Then passed on every hand  
The scornful jest, till laughter loud  
Ran high throughout the festive crowd ;  
Whistling through hollowed nuts, the pages cry,  
“ Such are the notes of Litvan melody !”  
Then Konrad rose : “ Ye valiant knights,  
The Order, as ye know, invites,  
This day, by ancient custom swayed,  
The homage by the conquered paid ;  
Presents the neighbouring princes give, —  
Such from this city we receive.  
This beggar will his offering bring, —  
A song,—forbid him not to sing :

'Tis his sole homage; let it be  
Like widow's mite of poverty.

“Amongst us here the prince we see  
Of Litva, with his chivalry,  
Guests of the Order; dear to them,  
Memory of former deeds must seem,  
Revived in songs of their own land;  
And those who cannot understand,  
Nor here desire to listen, they  
May hence depart.—The gloomy lay,  
Murmur incomprehensible,  
Of Litvan song, I love to feel  
At times, low falling on the ear;  
Just as with pleasure I can hear  
The noise of roaring waves, or still  
Can sit, to hear spring showers fall:  
They lull to slumber.—Sing, old bard.”



## SONG OF THE VAJDELOTE.

“ Before the plague at Litva strikes the blow,  
Its dread approach the seer’s eye can show ;  
For if to the Vajdelotes we credence give,  
Amid deserted tombs, we must believe,  
Or on some wasted plain, through shades of night,  
The maiden of the Plague stands forth to sight ;  
All white her clothing, while upon her brows  
A fiery garland with dread lustre glows.  
Her head o’er-tops the Bialovieskan woods,  
And in her hand a bloody ’kerchief waves.

“ Their eyes in fear the castle watchmen hide  
Beneath their helmets, round the village side,  
The guardian dogs, half burying in the earth  
Their heads, with terror tear the ground beneath,  
And with dread howl proclaim the scent of death.

“ With sad ill-boding steps the maiden walks,  
O’er village, castle, and rich city stalks ;

And each time at that 'kerchief's sign of blood  
A desert spreads, where once a palace stood,  
Wherever with her foot she prints the earth,  
Sudden, a new made grave starts gaping forth.

“ Oh ! fatal apparition ! but more dread,  
The misery threatened upon Litva's head,  
By that strange symbol from the German side,  
The cross of black upon the mantle wide,  
And ostrich plumes on glittering helmet borne.  
Where'er the steps of that dread phantom turn,  
'Twere nothing,—village waste, and ruined town,  
The whole wide land to a vast tomb is grown.  
Ah ! is there here but one, who dares to own  
A Litvan soul ?—come hither and sit down  
With me, beside a nation's funeral bier,  
With me to muse, to sing, to shed a tear.

“ Tradition—mighty arch to bind  
The cherished past of human kind  
With later years ;—when fortune darkly lowers

On thee, in faith of happier days,  
Her warriors' swords the nation lays,  
Her thread of thrilling thoughts, her feelings'  
flowers.

“ Arch ! unhurt by foreign blow,  
Long as thy magic form shall know,  
No stain from thine own people's hands :  
Traditionary song ! on guard that stands,  
As at some temple's portal, where the best,  
The nation's dearest recollections rest,  
With wings and voice of the archangel, thou  
At times canst wield the archangel's weapons too.

“ Flame, ancient painted records can devour,  
Armed robbers desolate a treasure store ;  
The song escapes entire, pervading far.  
The crowd of men, and if, its voice to hear,  
Only base souls are found, who never knew  
To nourish it with tears, with hope bedew,  
It seeks the mountains, round some ruin climbs,  
And thence it tells its tale of other times.

“Just as the nightingale her flight will take,  
With the up-shooting flames, that furious break  
Throughout the burning tenement ; but still,  
Upon the tottering roof delays awhile,  
When sinks the roof, quick to the woods she soars,  
Thence, o’er fresh graves and recent ashes, pours  
To the lone traveller, his path along,  
From deep melodious breast, her mournful song.

“Such song I’ve heard,—upon some battle plain,  
Where rest the relics of the mighty slain :  
The aged peasant drives his ploughshare on,  
Till, as those mouldering bones it grates upon,  
In sudden thought his toilsome task he stays,  
And, on his humble flute of willow, plays  
The requiem for the dead, or, in some pious song,  
Records your praise, great fathers, childless, ah !  
too long.

Echo replied,—I heard its voice from far,  
And more that cadence grieved mine eye, mine  
ear,

That I was there alone to see and hear.

“As the archangel’s trump from tombs shall call  
The slumbering dead, on that day last of all;  
So, at the sound of song, beneath my feet  
The bones that lie, impatient clustering meet  
In giant stature : from each ruined heap,  
Column and arched roof start into shape ;  
The desert lake resounds with numerous oars,  
The castle’s open portal next appears,  
The crowns of princes, arms of warriors rise,  
The minstrels sing, the maiden circle plies  
The mazy dance,—yes, ’twas a vision fair :  
How fearful then my sad awakenings are.

“The woods, the native hills are seen no more;  
No more on pinions tired the mind can soar,  
But falls,—and shrinks within its own sad breast ;  
In withered hand the harp must silent rest :  
Often ’mid my compatriots’ sighs and tears  
The voices of the past scarce reach these ears ;  
But, while some sparks of youthful warmth yet  
gleam  
Within my breast, oft-times the fires shall seem

To kindle into life, my soul revive,  
And memory some mysterious light receive.  
Then, like a crystal lamp shall memory shine,  
That, drawn with many a pictured form and line,  
Though dust and scars have seared its beauty o'er,  
Yet shows some shadowy brilliancy once more,  
If but a light you place within its heart ;  
Still its sweet freshness on the eye will dart,  
Still, on the palace walls, a carpet's hues,  
Beauteous, though somewhat seared, its radiance  
shows.

“ Oh were I capable, so to transfuse  
Some sacred fire within the breasts of those,  
Who listen here, and once more to revive  
The forms of the long past,—or knew to give  
Unto my words some soul-awakening sound,  
To pierce each brother heart that slumbers round ;  
Perchance, in that same moment they might feel,  
When the song's accents to their soul should steal,  
Might feel the pulse their heart once joyed to own,  
Their soul into its former greatness grown,

One moment live exalted and sublime,  
As their great fathers lived long years of olden  
time.

“ But why despairing call on ages past ?  
As yet, the singer no reproach can cast  
On his own times,—behold a man, not far,  
But living, great, among us,—Litvans can ye  
hear.”

The old man ceased, and some time listening  
sat,  
Permission for his further song to wait ;  
Throughout the hall a lengthened silence reigned ;  
From such a sign the minstrel courage gained,  
To recommence his song. Then he began,  
But to a different time the numbers ran,  
His voice in fall of freer measures broke,—  
Weaker,—now clearer tones by turns it took,  
Till, from a lofty hymn, it told a simple tale.

## THE TALE OF THE VAJDELOTE.

Whence with booty rich returning, come these Litvan  
bands ?

In nightly foray they have swept the bordering Prussian  
lands :

From castle and from sacred church, the plunder gained  
they bring,

And, by the conquering horsemen's side, linked in a  
mournful string,

A troop of German captives run, their hands behind them  
bound,

And leading cords about their necks; despairing they  
look round,

They look towards Prussia,—and their homes lament with  
streaming tears ;

They look towards Kovno,—to their God commend them  
in their prayers.

Round Kovno far extended lies Peruna's fatal plain ;

There did the Litvan princes use, in vengeance for the  
slain,



(The victory gained) the German knights to burn upon  
the pile.

But see, two captive knights that ride, with fearless air  
the while

Towards dreaded Kovno; one in youth and beauteous  
form appears,

The other shows the bending weight of all-subduing  
years;

They rushed together in the fight from out a German  
band,

And 'mid the Litvans shelter sought; when captive  
brought they stand

Before Prince Kiejstut, he made sign the strangers to  
receive

In friendship, but with fitting guard, — and in due time  
will give,

Within his castle, ready ear to learn their mutual tale.

He asked them what their country, what motive could  
prevail

To bring them there. I know not, the youngest then  
replied,

What my name, or to what race my parent were allied;

At ten years old, by German force, to slavery dragged  
away ; —

A city vast, somewhere it was, 'tis all that I can say,  
In Litva, where my parents' house, that long lost mansion  
stood ;

Built of red brick upon a hill the house, while round, of  
wood,

The town was humbler built. A forest vast of waving  
pine,

Spread the surrounding plain, and far away, the trees  
between,

Was seen the glittering lake. At length one night,—can  
I forget ? —

A dreadful sound aroused us all from sleep, I hear it  
yet ;

At every window gleamed a dreadful light of lurid day,  
Each bursting lattice crackling falls, 'mid wreaths of smoke,  
that play

Round burning roofs ; we seek the gate, the sparks in  
deluge fall,

A frightful glare shoots down the street, — To arms ! to  
arms ! they call,

The Germans are within our walls,—to arms ! quick to the  
door,

(His weapons found) my father rushed,—rushed, and  
returned no more.

The Germans fell upon our house, and one laid hands on  
me,

Dragged me upon his horse : what more then passed I did  
not see ;

Only my mother's dreadful shriek, long, long I heard  
afar ;

'Mid clang of arms and ruins' fall, that shriek still struck  
mine ear ;

It followed me, and in my heart it ever will remain.

E'en now, if cries by chance I hear, or burnings see, —  
again

That shriek awakens in my soul, as when the thunder's  
roar

Wakes echo, in some cavern vast, on ocean's rocky shore.

Now I have told the whole I know, of Litva or my  
race ;

Yet still at times, in dreams of night, each half remem-  
bered face

And form adored, of father, mother, brothers, greets mine  
eyes,

But, as the years advance, a cloud mysterious seems to rise,  
Darker and thicker, with its veil those traits beloved to  
shroud.

Thus childhood's years ran on, while I, amid the German  
crowd,

Like German lived; Walter my name was changed, to  
please their will,

To Alf, — but, with a German name, my soul was Litvan  
still :

Still, vain regrets for parents dear were twined around my  
heart,

Still vengeance lived within my breast, nor ever shall  
depart !

Vinrich, Grand-Master of the knights, his palace made my  
home,

Caressed me like a son beloved, and, when the time was  
come,

At the baptismal christian font, held me with his own  
hand.

But soon of palaces I tired, nor longer could withstand,

From Vinrich's knees to fly, and seek the ancient Vajdelote.

He, that old Litvan Vajdelote, long years ago was brought,  
To pine in German slavery, and 'midst them still retained,  
To serve as their interpreter in war, he there remained.

He, when he heard of me, that late from Litva dragg'd  
away,  
A mourning orphan I was brought, oft-times he would  
essay  
To tempt me towards him, then he told of Litva, in  
Litva's tongue,  
And fed my sinking soul with strains of our own native  
song.  
Oft on the dark blue Niemen's shore together we would  
stand,  
For, thence I gazed on the loved hills of our dear father-  
land :  
When to the castle we returned, the old man wiped his  
eyes,  
To lull suspicion, and mine, too, he wiped ; but fresh  
supplies

Of vengeance, poured within my heart, against the German  
name.

Well, I remember, when within the castle back I came,  
I sharpened secretly a knife, and, with what vengeful  
joy,

I Vinrich's carpets cut, his mirrors scratched, and to  
destroy

His shield's fair polish, sand I threw, and spat upon its  
face.

Oft in my later youthful years, from Kleyped's landing  
place,

The old man and I together launched to seek the Litvan  
shore,

And from its cherished banks I snatched in haste some  
native flower :

I breathed its lovely odours in, and felt some secret spell  
Call up the thoughts that long had slept in memory's  
silent cell ;

Drunk with the odours, then it seemed I was again a  
child,—

That still my brothers played around, that still my parents  
smiled.

In words more sweet than herb or flower, from memory's  
cherished store,  
The old man then traced the happy past, and pictured,  
how, once more  
Sweet it would be, in my own land, 'mid friends and  
kindred dear,  
Moments of youth to spend, and how such moments  
should appear  
No more, to crowds of Litva's sons, that sighed in German  
chains ;  
Such stories in our fields he told, but when we left the  
plains,  
And stood upon Polangen's shore, where with repeated  
bound,  
The thundering breast of the broad sea strikes the resisting  
ground,  
And from its foaming throat pours out fountains of mingled  
sand ;  
"Seest thou," the old man said, "the green that joins the  
barren strand,—  
That barren covering spreads apace around each flower fair,  
That, with its head resisting still, pants for the freshening  
air:

In vain, for still the gravelly front, like hydra new revives,  
And spreads its whitening scales; in vain the living  
          verdure strives,  
Against that desert-spreading power, its struggling life to  
          save.

My son, the spring flowers you behold sink living to their  
          grave,  
They the subdued nations, they our Litvan brethren  
          are.

My son, the sand advancing on, 'mid wild sea-tempests'  
          jar, —  
That is the Order;”—how my heart was torn when thus he  
          spoke,

I wish the Teutons to destroy, or to escape their yoke,  
And fly again to Litva. The old man would then  
          restrain

My eagerness. “Free knights,” he said, “upon the open  
          plain,  
May choose their weapons, and disdain all but an equal  
          foe;  
But we must wait; — in secret strive the German arts to  
          know;



To learn their warlike stratagems ; their confidence must  
gain,

And later see what can be done." I knew it was in vain  
The old man's counsel to resist, and to his words obeyed ;  
I with the Teuton armies went ; but, when abroad displayed,

In the first combat, there my country's standard met mine  
eyes ;

When 'gan upon mine ear our native war-song notes to  
rise,

Towards my own countrymen I rushed, and led the old  
man with me.

So, when in cruel cage confined, the falcon wild you  
see,

Dragged from his native nest, what though the hunter's  
barbarous art

Teach him his brethren to pursue, let him but once  
depart,

Take his wild flight, and meet his brother falcons in the  
sky,

No sooner to the clouds he soars, compasses with his  
eye

His native blue expanse wide spread, and through the  
ether springs,

In the free air draws breath, and hears the rustle of his  
wings,

Huntsman go home, and with thy cage no more the falcon  
wait.

The young man ended; all the while Kiejstut attentive  
sat,

Attentive, too, his daughter sat, Aldona young and  
fair,

Beautiful as a deity ; —

Now had the sinking year

Brought Autumn days, and with the time, drew longer  
evenings on ;

And while the young Kiejstuta sat, the accustomed group  
among,

Her sisters here, her maidens round, while in their busy  
hands

Some 'broidery fair, or various work is seen, then, Walter  
stands,

Strange things about the German land, and his own  
youth he tells :

Each word of Walter deep within the maiden's memory  
dwells.

And through her watching ears absorbed into her eager  
mind,

At times will in her hours of sleep unconscious utterance  
find.

Beyond the Niemen, Walter told, what splendid castles  
rise,

What cities vast, what garments rich, what gay festivities ;  
How valiant knights in tournament break lance, while  
maidens fair

From balconies adjudge the crown the victor's brow shall  
wear.

Beyond the Niemen too, he told, there a great God is  
known,

And the immaculate Mother, that bore his divine Son,  
Whose traits he in a picture showed, mysteriously ex-  
pressed.

That picture strange the young man bore piously on his  
breast ;

But gave it to the Litvan maid, the day her simple  
mind  
Conversion to his faith confessed, — when in communion  
joined,  
With her the Saviour's prayer he said ; and all that more  
he knew,  
He wished to teach her ;—then, alas ! too far his teaching  
grew,  
He taught her what himself knew not as yet,—taught her  
to love.  
And much he taught himself, for now what wild emotions  
move  
His breast, when from her lips he heard the long lost  
Litvan sounds,  
With each expression some new sense within his bosom  
bounds,  
Wakened afresh, like spark from latent ashes, then how  
sweet  
The names of kindred, friendship,—sweetest friendship,  
'twas to greet,  
And sweeter still than all, the word “to love,” that e'er  
shall stand,

With but one equal upon earth, the word, — “our father-land.”

What sudden change, then Kiejstut thought, comes o’er  
my daughter’s mind,  
Where is her former cheerfulness, and why no more  
inclined

To sports that other maidens love? On festive holiday,  
While others all in the light dance pass the bright hours  
away,

She solitary sits, or else with Walter talks alone.

On common days, at various work, Aldona, too, was  
known,

Like others, with embroidery frame, or needle ever  
nigh;

The needle now falls from her hands, the threads in  
tangles lie;

Herself e’en sees not what she does; on every side ’tis  
said:

At evening tide I find a rose in hues of green arrayed,  
While the young leaves she paints with silk the colour of  
the rose.

How can she see, when all her looks alone are fixed on  
those

Of Walter ;—when 'tis Walter's eye, his words alone she  
seeks.

My question,—whither is she gone ?—but one reply be-  
speaks, —

'Tis to the valley, — and whence comes she back, 'tis still  
the same,

Still from the valley: what may form the valley's secret  
charm ?

The young man has for her, of late, planted a garden  
there ;

And looks that garden fairer than my castle gardens  
are ?

(A splendid garden Kiejstut had, where pears and apples  
grew,

In rich abundance, and their charm the Kovno maidens  
knew :)

My garden pleases her no more, her window too I've  
seen,

In winter,—how upon the glass there forms no icy  
screen,

Where towards the Niemen's side it looks,—but, as in  
balmy May,

Transparent there the crystal shines,—’tis Walter comes  
that way ;

Doubtless she at the window sits, and melts, with her  
warm sighs,

The yielding ice. I thought indeed, as now our princes  
prize,

To see their children read and write, that such was their  
employ,

That such he taught her,—and how good and valiant is  
the boy,

Learned in writings like a Priest,—shall I drive him away,  
Out of my house?—him whom I find Litva’s best hope  
and stay ?

How well a squadron he can range, or an intrenchment  
form,

And plant those dreaded mouths of fire that rain their  
iron storm !

Go, Walter,—thou my armies’ strength,—’tis thou alone  
shalt be

Aldona’s husband, Litva’s hope, and more than all to me.  
Aldona married Walter,—Germans, doubtless you suppose,  
That here our tedious tale will find a fitting final close :

In your love tales, the troubadour, 'tis true, concludes  
his song,  
When the knights marry ; only he tells, happy they lived  
and long ;  
Walter too loved his wife, but—noble in mind,—could  
know,  
No joy, while o'er his native land spread the dark clouds  
of woe.

Hardly the earth has drunk the winter snows, and the  
first song  
Of the blithe rising lark is heard,—to other lands, how  
long  
That sound a sound of joy has been,—but to poor Litva's  
ears  
No joy it brings; burnings and death the quick revolving  
years  
Bring with them. Then the Teuton ranks, afresh, a  
ceaseless throng  
March forward, and through Kovno's vale the fearful  
sound prolong,—



Far o'er the bordering Niemen's hills, a numerous army's  
tread :

The clang of arms, the war-horse neigh, while, o'er the  
valley spread,

The camp extends like a white mist: at intervals be-  
tween,

The flags that mark the advancing posts in the dim light  
are seen,

Like lightning when the tempest lowers. The Germans  
hold their ground

On Niemen's shore ; a bridge they cast, and compass Kovno  
round.

Day after day, by battering rams the walls and bastions  
fall ;

Night after night, destructive mines with their dread  
sound appal ;

Ascending from thick clouds of smoke, the shells incessant  
fly,

With wings of fire, and mark their prey, like falcon from  
on high ;

They strike the yielding roofs, and soon must Kovno in  
ruins lie ;

Litva on Kiejdan now retires, Kiejdan to ruin falls ;  
Mountains and woods alone remain, nature's own native  
walls :

There Litva long resists, while still, plundering and burn-  
ing far,

The Germans spread, and ceaseless wage exterminating  
war.

Kiejstut and Walter, first in fight, were last in the retreat :  
Kiejstut was ever calm,—from childhood's days was used  
to meet,

And fight the foe, to fall on them, brief 'vantage gain,—  
then fly :

So lived his father, and himself so thought to live and  
die :

Against the Germans struggling on, in the same path to  
tread,

His father's steps, nor forward thought to cast one look of  
dread ;

Other the thoughts of Walter were, amid the German  
bands

Brought up, the Order's power he knew,—into the Master's  
hands,

He knew all Europe would pour forth, from out her empire wide,

Troops, weapons, countless treasures too, to gather at his side.

The Prussians after struggle vain groan 'neath the Teuton sway,

And soon or late must Litva share the same sad fate as they.  
Prussia in misery he had seen, and trembled at the thought  
Of Litva's future fate. "My son, with evil bodings fraught,  
A fatal prophet," Kiejstut said, "thou com'st to lift the veil,

And wide display the deep abyss at which my senses fail ;  
For while I listen to thy words, my hands seem 'reft of power,

And with the hope of victory lost, my heart is bold no more.  
What 'gainst these Germans can we do?" "My father,"  
Walter said ;

"One only certain mode I know,—but oh ! how full of dread !

Some day may tell it." Thus they talked after the fight was done,

Until to combat and fresh loss the trumpet called them on.

Kiejstut more melancholy grew,—Walter how greatly  
changed!  
Formerly, tho' in narrow bounds his gayer humour ranged,  
(For in his happiest moments past, a shade of thought was  
seen,  
To cloud his cheek) yet in Aldona's arms, an air serene  
Her presence shed, nor once she missed the welcome of a  
smile,  
Or greeted with such touching look as seemed to bless the  
while;  
But now it seemed some secret grief his inward soul op-  
pressed;  
Before the house, the morning through, his arms across  
his breast,  
Silent he stands, and gazes on the clouds of smoke that  
rise  
From towns and villages around,—gazes with 'wildered  
eyes;  
At night, oft starting from his sleep, with look of wild  
despair  
Fixed at the window, he surveys wide spread the bloody  
glare.

“Dear husband what can ail thee?”

(Aldona asks with tears).

WALTER.

What ails me?—Shall I quiet sleep, 'till suddenly appears  
The invading German at our gate, to tie the sleeper's  
                  hands,  
And to the executioner alone unloose his bands?

ALDONA.

Oh, God forbid! my husband dear; along the trenches  
                  deep  
The Guards are watching!—

WALTER.

—True, my love; I too the watch will keep,  
Sabre in hand, but when at last those guards have perished  
                  all,  
The sabre blunted . . . . . Listen!—When old age on  
                  me shall fall,  
Such misery if I live to see . . .

ALDONA.

God! give us children dear,  
Our comfort and defence in age.

WALTER.

Still ever pressing near,  
The Germans will upon us fall, and thee, my wife, shall  
slay,  
And, destined to some prison far, my children tear away,  
Where they shall learn to aim the spear e'en at their pa-  
rents' heart,  
And I, perhaps, a traitor vile, had borne no better part,  
Had killed my father, slain my brothers, had not the  
Vajdelote ——

ALDONA.

Dear Walter, let us further go,—in Litva hide remote,  
'Mid her far hills, and forests wild the Germans dare not  
come.

WALTER.

Then shall we other mothers leave, and children, to their  
doom;

The Prussians so to Litva's bounds, chased by the Germans, fled :

If to the hills we should be tracked?—

ALDONA.

Further we still may speed.

WALTER.

Further,—further! unhappy one! past Litva shall we go?  
And fall in Tartar hands or Russ, a still more dreadful  
foe?

No answer then Aldona gave; confounded quite she sat;  
As yet, her country's bounds, to her wide as the world  
were great,  
Wide without end, now first she heard Litva no hope  
affords;  
With wringing hands, some refuge yet she hopes from  
Walter's words.

One mode alone, Aldona dear, to Litva now remains,—  
To break the Order's power, and save our country from  
their chains :

To me that mode is known, but oh! for God's sake seek  
no more

To ask it of me, for a hundred times be cursed the hour,  
When, forced by our dread enemy, I make that meansavail!  
Further he would not tell, nor could Aldona's prayers  
prevail:

Litva in misery, alone absorbed his eye,—his ear,  
Until the flame within his breast no longer he could bear;  
That flame of vengeance, long suppressed, and long in  
silence fed,

Burst round his heart and left its pulse, to other feelings  
dead:

All thoughts he chased, all feelings quelled and to extir-  
pate strove

E'en that sole solace of the past—e'en that one feeling,—  
love.

So, some old Bialovieskan Oak;—when hunters there have  
been,

And living embers careless left to burn its heart within,  
The forest monarch soon must strew his airy leaves around,  
Next, carried by the winds away, his branches strew the  
ground.



And last of all, his verdant crown of ever living green—  
The lasting mistletoe, is dried, and life no more is seen.

Long 'mid their castles, hills, and woods, the Litvans  
wandering strayed,  
Tracked by the Germans, or in turn assailing effort  
made;  
Until at last Rudava's plain in seas of blood was dyed;  
There tens of thousands Litvan youth were slain, and by  
their side,  
Of Teuton brothers, chiefs, and knights, as many thou-  
sands fell.  
But soon from sea fresh troops arrive, the German ranks  
to swell:  
Kiejstut and Walter sought the hills,—a handful of the  
brave  
Alone remained, their sabres hacked, their shields all cleft,  
they gave  
Sad token of disasters past, and dangers yet to come,  
As, soiled with dust and mingled blood, they enter each  
their home.

Walter looked not upon his wife, no greeting from him  
broke,

With Kiejstut and the Vajdelote in German phrase he  
spoke:

Aldona understood them not, only her heart foretold  
Some dread event: Long time they thus, mysterious coun-  
sel hold :

Then all upon Aldona looked, with sad dejected air ;  
Walter the longest looked, with signs of speechless deep  
despair.

At last, quick from his aching eyes, the rapid tear-drops  
start :

Then at Aldona's feet, he pressed her hands upon his heart,  
And pardon asked, for all the woes that she had borne  
for him.

"Woe! to the women," then he said, "that love such  
frenzied men :

Such men whose roving eyes beyond their village dare to  
stray :

Whose thoughts,—like smoke that through the roof per-  
petual finds its way,—

Whose hearts,—beyond their home-retreat for distant  
objects strive:

Great hearts, Aldona, they are like a too extensive hive;  
The honey cannot fill them, they become the lizard's nest.  
Pardon, Aldona dear! to-day with thee I mean to rest:  
To-day, forgetting all our woes, we will together spend  
As formerly we oft have done, to-morrow" . . . . . he  
dared not end.

Joy for Aldona! then she thought Walter indeed would  
change!

Again his harassed thoughts would move in their once  
quiet range:

Less gloomy looks his anxious brow, more lively beam his  
eyes,

While on his pallid cheek there seems the blush of health  
to rise.

Unmoving from Aldona's feet, Walter that evening passed;  
Litva, the Teutons, and the war, for once away he cast.  
Of happy times,—his first return to Litva, then he spoke;  
Their first discourse, and the first walk they in the valley  
took:

O'er each event, called up afresh, he gave his thoughts to  
rove,

Childish perchance, but not less dear, of their first dawn-  
ing love:

Why should "to-morrow,"—that one word, disturb dis-  
course so sweet?

Again, dejected, on his wife long time his looks are  
set;

Tears cloud his eyes, as for some grief he must, but dare  
not tell;

Summons he only feelings past? and do his thoughts but  
dwell

On former happiness,—to take of all a sad farewell?

All the discourse, the tenderness, which marked that  
closing day,

Shall it be, of their lamp of love but the expiring  
ray?

In vain to ask, Aldona looks, uncertain seeks to know;

Leaving her chamber, through the door, the chinks be-  
fore her shew,

Walter, who pours out wine, and in large goblets drinks  
it down,

And all that night, the Vajdelote he kept with him alone.

Scarce risen the sun, a clattering noise disturbs the  
morning still ;

Two knights with th' early mist that ride, hasting along  
the hill.

They passed the guards ;—but one there was, could they  
evade her sight ?

Vigilant are the eyes of love, Aldona guessed their flight !  
The valley's pathway she waylaid, dreadful the meeting  
there.

“ Return, my loved one, home return, heaven yet for thee  
may spare

Some happy days, — thy parents dear may make thee  
happy yet ;

Thou, young and fair, shalt other comfort find,—thou wilt  
forget !

Princes many, in days gone by, aspired to gain thy  
hand,

Now free, a great man's widow left, obey his last command,  
Who for his native country's good, relinquished, even  
thee.

Farewell, my love, try to forget, yet weep sometimes for  
me !

Walter everything has lost, Walter remains alone ;  
Like wind that o'er the desert sweeps,—he, the wide earth  
upon,  
Must wander, must deceive, must slay, then die himself  
at last  
Some horrid death ; but thou shalt find, after long years  
are past,  
The name of Alf, anew resound from every Litvan  
tongue ;  
His deeds the Vajdelotes shall tell, in their undying song :  
Then, loved one, then call thou to mind, amid the wonder-  
ing crowd,  
Who the mysterious clouds would pierce, that still his  
memory shroud,  
To one—to thee, he all is known, once husband was to  
thee,  
Such noble pride be thy support, when thou must orphan  
be.”

Aldona silent listening stood, but not one word she heard :  
“Thou goest ! thou goest !” she cried ; herself at her  
own voice was scared,

And that dread word, "thou goest," alone seemed in her  
ear to sound ;

Her thoughts, the past, the future, all in wild confusion  
drowned ;

But, in her heart, she felt too well, for her was no return.  
She never could forget the past :— her straining eye-balls  
burn ;

Often towards Walter they are thrown, and meet his  
'wildered gaze :

Already something there they find unlike the former days ;  
The consolation wanting there, she seems elsewhere to  
seek,

In some new object, that may yet on her sad prospect  
break.

All wood and wilderness around,—but, in the morning  
beam

Glitters afar, the woods among, beyond the Niemen's  
stream,

A solitary turret's form ; there, a lone building stands,  
A convent's new and sad retreat, built by the Christian  
hands.

Aldona's eyes and parting thoughts upon that turret rest,  
As, by the tempest borne away, amid the ocean vast,

A dove lights on the passing mast of some stray bark unknown.

Walter could understand that look. In silence both pass on.

Then his intention he revealed, but, wrapt in mystery deep,

Silence profound, before the world, Aldona's lips must keep ;

And at the gate, — alas ! who shall that dreadful parting tell ?—

Alf with the Vajdelote rode on ;—time since does not reveal.

The unknown destiny, that hangs over their mutual path.

Woe ! woe !—if unfulfilled still rests his dreadful oath,—

If, happiness himself renounced, Aldona's poisoned too,—

If, so much sacrificed, as yet, such sacrifice he view

In vain ;—the future yet may tell—

Germans, I end my song !

“ The end !—so soon the end ! ”—the hall

Resounds with the tumultuous call.

“ What of that Walter ?—what his deeds ?—

Where ?—against whom, and whence proceeds



That vengeful threat?"—the listeners cry.  
One only there sat silent by,—  
The Master, 'mid the noisy throng,  
With head inclined, but frequent wrung  
With some deep thoughts his anxious breast ;  
And constant, as each moment past,  
Goblets of wine he swallowed down ;  
A change is o'er his features thrown,  
New feelings flash with sudden break,  
Across his flame-enkindled cheek ;  
More and more threatening clouds his brow,  
His trembling lips more livid grow,  
His staring eyes dart here and there,  
Like swallows through the stormy air :  
At last, his mantle down he flings,  
And furious, in the midst he springs ;  
"Where is the end?—Come, instantly,  
And sing the end of the song to me !  
Or give the harp:—why stand ye there,  
Trembling, nor further seem to dare?—  
Give me the harp,—new goblets fill !  
If you to end it fear, I will :

“ I know ye well, ye Vajdelotes!—  
Always your song some woe denotes,  
Foretelling miseries, like the howl  
Of dogs, at midnight hour that prow! ;  
Burnings and death ye love to sing ;  
Glory and griefs to us ye bring :  
Your trait’rous song, the cradled child  
First feels, as the delusion wild  
Coils like a viper round his heart,  
A dreadful poison to impart,—  
Mad thirst for glory, or vain love  
Of country, in his breast to move.

“ Then on his youthful steps ’twill tread,  
Like some slain foe’s unquiet shade ;  
At times break forth in festive hour,  
The wine with mingled blood to pour.  
I madly once such songs could hear . . . .  
Be it so, be it,—you, old man,—  
Old traitor ! you have played and won ;  
War murmurs through your poesy,—  
Bring wine : your hopes fulfilled shall be.

“I know the ending of your song :  
No,—I will sing another. Long  
The time since on the hills of Spain  
I learned a Moorish ballad strain.  
Old man, those notes of childhood play,—  
Those notes,—which, in the valley . . . stay, —  
Yes, those were times of happiness,—  
That sound my soul shall ever bless,  
My heart respond. Old man, stay there !  
For, by all gods Prussian, I swear,  
Or German,—the old man must remain !”  
He struck the harp,—a fitful strain ;  
And with uncertain notes he went,  
To the wild tones, that Konrad sent,  
Like slave, behind his angry lord.

Meantime, upon the festive board,  
The lights are sinking, the long feast  
Has lulled to sleep each knightly guest.  
But Konrad still will sing. They rise  
Anew, and stand with wondering eyes,  
Round him in narrower circle throng,  
And weigh each accent of the song.

## BALLAD.

The Moorish power to ruin falls,  
The nation breaks its chains ;  
Yet, still hold out Granada's walls,  
Though there the plague-spot reigns.

In Alpuhara's tower, some brave  
Almanzor still can form,  
Beneath him, Spain's dread banners wave,—  
To-morrow,—to the storm.

At rising sun the cannons wake,  
Tear the defences down ;  
The Cross now crowns the minaret's peak,  
Spain makes the tower her own.

Almanzor, when th' assailing host  
No efforts brave could stay,  
Alone, through pikes and sabres crossed,  
In safety cut his way.

Spain, on the castle's ruined heaps,  
    'Mid corpse and crumbled stone,  
In floods of wine her revel keeps,  
    Shares out the booty won.

Word came then from the outer guard,  
    " A stranger prince is here,  
Who prays he speedy may be heard,  
    Great tidings to declare."

Almanzor, king of the Moslem,  
    'Twas he,—a safe retreat  
He quits, and life alone will claim,  
    Submissive at their feet.

" Spaniard, at threshold of your door,  
    I came, to strike my brow ;  
The Christian's God I here adore,  
    Faith to your prophet vow.

" Let glory tell, let the world see,  
    An Arab king cast down  
Can brother to his conquerors be,  
    Vassal of foreign crown."

Spaniards true valour well can prize ;  
When they Almanzor knew,  
The chief embraced him, all then rise  
A comrade's love to shew.

Almanzor, all embraced in turn,  
But most their chief caressed,  
Hung on his neck, clung to his hand,  
Long to his lip was pressed.

Then sudden falls upon his knees,  
Fainting,—with trembling hands,  
His turban round the Spaniard's feet,  
Drags him in willing bands.

He looked,—they gaze with strange surprise,  
Pale—livid turns his face,  
Horridly smile his lips,—his eyes  
Quick streams of blood deface.

See, Giaour ! I am pale and wan !  
Guess who my mission gave :  
The plague, I from Granada bring,  
Nothing thy life can save.

In that embrace, within thy soul  
A poison deep doth lie;  
Look, for to thee my sufferings tell,  
The death ye all shall die.

He turns him,—calls,—in one embrace  
Prolonged, extends his arms;  
As though all Spaniards he would press,—  
Laughs: well that laugh alarms.

He laughed,—he died,—his eyelids still,  
His lips, unclosed remain;  
There shall that laugh for ever dwell,—  
E'en his cold lips retain.

The Spaniards, scared, no longer stay;  
The plague attends them still;  
Their blackened corpses strew the way  
From famed Granada's hill.

“ So could the Moor his vengeance take !  
What project can a Litvan make  
For vengeance ?—Do you wish to know ?  
Well ! If perchance he keep his vow,

Round you the pestilence entwine,  
Or mix it in your cup of wine.  
But no,—oh no ! to-day at least  
Are other customs ; at our feast  
Prince Vitold sits, the Litvan lords  
Give us their lands, lend us their swords,  
On their own suffering people seek,  
With Teutons joined, revenge to take !

“ But still,—no, by Peruna !—no !  
Not all,—for Litva still can show  
Some . . . . I have something yet to sing :  
Away that harp ! there jars a string—  
’Tis broken,—there shall be no song,—  
Yet I will hope there once again  
Shall be . . . . to-day, too much my brain  
O’erflows with wine,—rejoice !—be gay !  
And thou Al . . . manzor,—quick ! away,  
Old man !—quick from my eyes begone !  
Halban away !—leave me alone.”

He ended, and again made space  
With faltering steps, to find his place :



Then sank into his chair, but still  
Some smothered threats his lips conceal :  
His foot a sudden movement made,  
Which cups, and wine, and table laid  
O'erturned upon the ground,—at length,  
In weakness sinks his spirit's strength ;  
His head, supported by his chair,  
Falls back,—one moment 'wilder'd stare,  
Then close his eyes,—his quivering lips  
Are hid in foam : at last he sleeps !

The knights a moment wondering stand :  
Too well 'tis known on every hand,  
How Konrad, when inflamed with wine  
Will constant thus his sense resign,  
Into some sudden madness fall ;  
But here at feast, in open hall !  
A public shame,—when called to meet  
Some foreign guests,—these so to greet !  
Such unexampled rage to show !  
Who has excited him ?—where now  
That Vajdelote ?—He's gone ;—but where ?  
Not one among them can declare.

The tale went round, that, in disguise,  
'Twas Halban worked that strange surprise ;  
That he it was, the Litvan song  
Had sung to Konrad ; thus among  
The Christian bands, to stir their rage,  
War fiercer on the foe to wage.  
But why that sudden change that broke  
Upon the Master ?—wherefore took  
Vitold such fearful anger ? Then,  
What that fantastic ballad mean,  
Sung by the Master ? All in vain  
They strive these mysteries to explain.



## THE WAR.



## THE WAR.

WAR!—Konrad now no more can stay  
 The people's ardour, nor allay  
 The council's loud demands. One cry  
 Alone through the whole land runs high;  
 On Litva vengeance to the death! —  
 Vengeance for Vitold's perjured faith!

Vitold, who for the Order's aid,  
 In suppliant guise so late had prayed,  
 To repossess, by their dread power,  
 Vilna, his capital, once more;  
 No sooner from the banquet passed,  
 And certain news, that now, at last,  
 The Teuton ranks will take the field, —

His purpose changed — too plain revealed, —  
When on the eve of battle day,  
He led his knights by stealth away;  
The Teuton castles on the road  
He entered, and feigned orders showed,  
As under the Grand-Master's hand:  
The garrisons, at his command  
Resigned their arms, but quickly found,  
Fire and destruction spread them round.  
Inflamed alike with shame and rage,  
The Order, now, will furious wage  
'Gainst Litva a crusading war:  
A Bull arrives,—soon shall appear  
From sea, from land, a countless swarm —  
Knights, warriors, vassals — all that arm;  
The cross of red their shields display;  
One dreadful oath they all obey —  
The pagans to the Christian faith  
To bend,—or sweep them from the earth.

They go towards Litva, and what there  
They do,—if you would know, come here,

Ascend the ramparts, cast your eyes  
Towards Litva, when the day-light dies :  
Behold that glare, whose bloody light  
Streams upwards o'er the arch of night ;  
Those are the signs of spoiling war,  
Their import may few words declare ;  
Massacre, rapine, fire and glare :  
In these the maddened crowd rejoice,  
But, the reflecting Sage, a voice  
Can hear, from those dread scenes arise,  
That loud to Heaven for vengeance cries.

The wind now bears the burnings far,  
The knights still wage destructive war,  
To Litva's depths profound press on ;  
Kovno and Vilna will be won,  
So says report,—their siege is laid ;  
At length all news is sudden staid ;  
Alike report and message cease,  
That dreadful glare they see decrease ;  
No longer near, the reddening beam  
Shoots up ; the rays now faintly gleam,  
And in the distance melt away.



In vain the Prussians, day by day,  
Expect from the new-conquered land,  
Rich booty, and a captive band  
Of prisoners too, — alike in vain  
They frequent send some news to gain;  
The messengers return no more;  
Dread state ! where each is left to guess  
Some fancied picture of distress :  
Far better were confirmed despair !

The autumn passed, the winter snows  
Pour from each mountain ridge, and close  
The encumbered roads : again shoots forth  
From far, across the vault of heaven,  
The night aurora of the north ;  
Or, gleams the light of burnings driven  
Along that sky ? — more plain each night  
Its glaring strikes their dazzled sight,  
More near the heavens display the light.

From Marienburg, with anxious gaze,  
Each eye the distant road surveys.

When lo! afar, across the waste,  
Some men on foot, with toil that haste,  
Through deepening snows to make their way:  
Konrad? — our chiefs? — can it be they?  
How to salute them? — conquerors? — no,  
Rather such guise a flight may show;  
And where the rest? — With up-raised hand,  
Konrad points out a scattered band: —  
That sight, alas! the truth betrayed,  
Disordered they come on, till, stayed  
By heaps of snow, some sink beneath;  
They fall, they tread to mutual death,  
Like struggling insects, in a mass  
Cooped up, within some narrow vase.  
They mount o'er corpses, till new groups  
Press down the still up-struggling heaps,  
Some yet drag on their stiffened feet,  
Others their death more speedy meet  
Frozen upon the road; yet stand  
Their haggard corpses, while one hand  
Stretched towards the city they display,  
And like road columns point the way.

Forth from the city, now, a crowd,  
Alarmed and curious, line the road ;  
They fear to guess, — no question ask ;  
That dreadful sight spares them the task,  
The expedition's fate to seek ;  
Too well the unhappy annals speak,  
In each sunk eye and haggard cheek.  
Death hung upon those eyes, the trace  
Of harpy hunger seared each face :  
Here, from advancing Litvan bands,  
The trumpet sounds ;—the wind there sends  
The driving snow across the plain ;  
From far is borne the horrid moan,  
Of starved dogs, while, o'er their head,  
The circling crows expectant spread.

All lost ! Konrad has ruined all !  
He, with his sword, at danger's call,  
Who had such honour gained, could boast  
Such vigilance in seasons past ;  
In the last war, quite nerveless found,  
And negligent, not once could sound

The cunning snares that Vitold laid ;  
But, blindly still deceived, betrayed  
By the vain hope of vengeance near,  
To Litva's steppes vast and drear  
He pushed the army, — lingering staid, —  
And tedious siege to Vilna laid.

Then, when the cattle all were gone,  
No more supplies from booty won,  
When hunger now the camp distressed,  
The foe around them closely pressed,  
Destroying every succour nigh ;  
When daily hundreds starved die,  
From 'mid their ranks, 'twas time no more  
To linger there, but end the war, —  
To storm the town, or quick retreat.  
In confidence, there most unmeet,  
Did Vallenrod, quite void of heed,  
Forth the chase unthinking speed,  
Or, close within his tent confined,  
Some secret projects he designed,  
Nor, to those counsels deep, thought fit  
The chiefs assembled to admit.

So far his martial ardour failed,  
Not e'en his people's tears prevailed  
To move him ; they, who burning wait,  
The Order's fame to vindicate.  
But, with hands folded, each long day  
In silent thought he mused away,  
Or in discourse with Halban passed.  
Meanwhile, across the wintry waste  
The snows increase, fresh ranks arrived—  
To Vitold's force new strength supplied.  
He closes now their army round,  
Attacks them on their camped ground,  
Then,—stain in the great Order's fame !  
How shall their annals tell the shame ?  
The master fled from battle-field,  
And first the dreadful news revealed :  
No laurels gained, nor booty prize,  
But news of Litva's victories.

Saw you that haggard vampire host,  
Brought back from scenes of glory lost ?  
Marked you then Konrad's gloomy brow ?  
His cheeks the worm of suffering show

Unfolding, — Konrad suffers !— yes,  
But something more those eyes confess ;  
Those large half-open eyes that play,  
To dart askance their vivid ray ;  
Just like a comet threatening wars ;  
Or, as each sudden change appears,  
Like lightning flash that Satan tries,  
To glare some mid-night wanderer's eyes :  
There, rage and joy uniting blend,  
And gleamings half Satanic send.

The affrighted people murmur loud ;  
Konrad heeds not : from out the crowd  
The indignant knights to council calls ; —  
Some spell—oh, shame !— their heart appals ;  
His speech commenced their threatening quells,  
They listen to the tale he tells,  
In all their loss, trace the decree  
Of righteous-judging Deity ;  
For when shall fear's dominion fail,  
Over man's weakness to prevail ?

Stay, haughty Chief! a council meets :  
'Tis of thy guilt its judgment treats.  
In Marienburg, in vault profound,  
When slumber wraps the city round,  
There is the secret dread tribunal found.

One lamp alone hung from the dome,  
By day and night dispels the gloom :  
Twelve chairs are seen the throne beside ;  
On it, the book whose foldings hide  
Their secret laws. Twelve judges placed,  
In fullest sable armour braced,  
With masks that each stern visage shroud,  
In those deep vaults from vulgar crowd  
Can meet secure, while from each brother,  
The mask mysterious hides the other.

All swear, for every crime confessed,  
E'en on their mightiest chief, shall rest  
Due punishment, whether it lie  
Hidden, or shame the public eye;  
From sentence passed is no return,  
Nor would they spare a brother born.

By open force, or secret steel,  
That sentence shall the guilty feel, —  
The poniard in each searching hand,  
And at each side the ready brand.

One of the masks approached the throne,  
And there, before that sacred book,  
With sword in hand his station took.  
“Dread judges !” — then his words began,  
“Now our suspicions into truth are grown :  
This Konrad Vallenrod of far renown —

He is not Vallenrod.”

“Who is he ?” — “’Tis unknown : twelve years are  
gone,

Since to the lands he came where flows the Rhine ;  
When passed Earl Vallenrod to Palestine,  
He, in his suite, in page’s guise was found.  
Soon the Knight Vallenrod, somewhere unknown,  
Had vanished, — of his death there fell alone  
Suspicion on that page, who then no more  
Was seen, but with suspicious haste,  
Away in secret passed,  
And landed on the Spanish shore.



In battle with the Moors his valour shone,  
In tournament he made each wreath his own,  
Renowned by the great name of Vallenrod.  
At last he took the sacred Order's oath,  
And gained the Master's state, to bring us shame  
and death.

How he that office filled ye know.  
This winter, when with famine, snow,  
And Litvan hosts our brethren strove,  
Konrad was frequent known to rove  
Alone, and, in the woods concealed,  
Secret discourse with Vitold held.  
My spies of old his deeds discerned,  
When, soon as evening hour returned,  
He hid beneath that corner tower:  
They knew not the discourse he bore  
With the recluse ;—but, in each word,  
Judges ! the Litvan tongue they heard  
From Konrad ; —

Seeing then what, too well,  
Our envoys can to this tribunal tell  
About this man ; and what my spies, yet more,  
Of his past deeds were able to explore,

All which well nigh from public voice we hear ;  
Judges ! the Grand-Master stands accused by me,  
Of treason, falsehood, murder, heresy !”

Then the accuser knelt before the book,  
And in his hand the crucifix he took,—  
By God ! and by the Saviour’s sufferings, sealed  
In solemn oath, the truth that he revealed.

He ceased, and pondering what they heard  
The judges sit, but not one word,  
Nor even secret whisper passed,  
Nor eye was found stray look to cast,  
Nor head made sign, that might reveal,  
What in those breasts they each conceal,  
Of deep and threatening. One by one,  
Advancing they approached the throne ;  
With poniard’s point the book turned o’er ;  
The laws mysterious pondered there ;  
Alone, of their own conscience asked  
For counsel, ere they judgment passed :  
A common sentence each confessed  
In silence, then together pressed

A hand upon each heart, and low,  
That one dread word they utter, — Woe !  
Three times the walls the echo gave,  
Woe !—and no other phrase they have,  
But only that one word of,—Woe !  
May their dread sentence import show.

The judges are agreed,—twelve swords  
Upraised, speak threatening more than words,  
All pointed to one breast alone,—  
To Konrad's !—silent they pass on,  
And those dread walls, as forth they go,  
Behind them once more answered,—Woe !

## THE ADIEU.



## THE ADIEU.

A WINTRY morn,— with snow and wind—  
 Vallenrod flies that lake to find,  
 Nor wind nor snow his steps delayed,  
 Till by the lonely shore he stayed.  
 He calls,—impatient, with his sword  
 Strikes on the tower,—he calls, that word—  
 “Aldona,—now again we live !  
 Aldona,—thy beloved receive !  
 His vows fulfilled, he comes to thee.”

## THE RECLUSE.

Alf? — ’tis his voice !— ah ! can it be  
 My Alf beloved? — and is it peace ?

And thou art safe returned, to cease  
All further wanderings?—

KONRAD.

Oh, Heaven !

Ask nothing, but, thine ear be given,  
Attentive to each word I tell :  
They all have perished !—marked ye well  
Those burnings?—Didst thou see?—’Twas there  
Litva brought back her vengeful war  
Upon the German land. Long years  
Have yet to run, ere time repairs  
The ruin round the Order spread ;  
This hand has that destruction shed,  
And struck as with a poisoned dart,  
The hundred-headed monster’s heart :  
Their treasures waste avail no more,—  
That secret source of all their power ;  
My oath fulfilled,—the powers of hell  
No fiercer vengeful wish could feel ;  
Nor I, for I am human still,  
Though doomed with blood, or guile, to fill

My youthful years,—now bent with age,  
I tire of treasons : battle's rage  
I seek no more. The Germans, too,  
Are men,—let vengeance slumber now.  
Heaven seems to light my soul within ;  
I come from Litva, I have seen  
That spot, where once near Kovno stood  
Thy castle,—now in ruins laid :  
I turned away my eyes, I passed  
In flying speed, with eager haste,  
To that dear valley, once our own.  
All as of yore,—the flowers, fresh blown,  
As when, upon that evening fair,  
Our last adieus we offered there ;  
Seemed as, tho' since long years were flown,  
Again that evening round me shone.  
That stone,—do'st thou remember yet,—  
The limit we were wont to set  
To many a walk : its place I found,  
With moss and weed encumbered round,  
Scarce seen through its green veil of years :  
I tore the green,—and streaming tears



Shed o'er it. Then that grassy seat,  
Where from the summer noontide heat,  
Amid the shadowing maple trees,  
Thou lov'dst to rest, and court the breeze.  
The spring, which oft for thee I sought,  
And its refreshing waters brought;—  
I found them all, surveyed, ran o'er;  
E'en thy small garden, where of yore,  
Dry willow stems I planted round,  
All these, Aldona, still I found;  
But strange, those stems, which once this hand  
Fixed lightly in the arid sand,  
Now trees of lofty growth and fair,  
Waved their young spring-leaves in the air,  
And shed the down from each pale flower,—  
Ah! at that sight, some secret power,  
Seemed to light up within my heart  
A ray of hope, and to impart  
Presentiment of happiness.  
I grasped the boughs in my embrace;  
I knelt, and, "Oh my God!" I said,  
"Grant us but this accomplished,—"

Again our footsteps to be found  
Upon our native Litva's ground,  
Again fresh leaves of hope to see,  
Spring verdant round our destiny."

Then come, my love, delay no more,—  
Head of the Order, I have power  
To free thee, but why such command?  
Though hundred times more firm may stand  
Those gates than steel, I'll force them in,  
To ruin hurl the horrid scene ;  
Then thou, my love, that valley sweet,  
Again with the beloved shall greet ;  
Or in my hand I'll lead thee on,  
To Litva's deserts vast and lone.  
'Mid Bialovieska's darksome glades,  
Exist profound and noiseless shades,  
Where never on our ear shall break  
The clash of foreign arms, nor wake  
Shout of victorious enemies,  
Nor reach, our suffering brethren's sighs.  
There, in some lowly cot to hide,  
Upon thy bosom, near thy side,

I will forget the world around,—  
That crowded nations there are found,  
Nor feel that aught exists for me,  
But only live to live for thee :  
Then come, oh ! answer me, my love !"—  
Aldona still no answer gave :  
Konrad in silence waits reply,  
When faintly, in the Eastern sky,  
The twilight's early streaks appear ;  
" Oh Heaven ! Aldona, see'st thou there,  
Morn breaks, the world awakens round,  
Soon by the guard we shall be found,  
Aldona !"—and his quivering frame  
Wrung with impatience, as her name  
He called,—till voice no more was heard.  
His straining eyes alone implored,  
With agony, his clenched hands  
On high in frenzy he extends ;  
For pity prayed, embraced and pressed  
The cold tower, with his anguished breast.

" No, 'tis too late,"—a voice then spoke ;  
Peaceful, tho' sad, its accents broke—

“E’en the last blow I will not fear,  
For God will grant me strength to bear :  
When I this tower’s threshold passed,  
• I made my vow,—while life should last,  
Never from its sad walls to come,  
But quit them only for my tomb ;  
’Twas a dread struggle, and to-day,  
Thy words persuasive would essay  
To aid me ’gainst the will of God:

“Whom wouldst thou to the world restore ?  
Not the same form thou knew’st before ;  
But spectre horrible to see.  
Think, if I could so frenzied be  
To hear thee,—should this dungeon quit  
And raptured rush those arms to meet,  
And thou shouldst know me not,—shouldst fly,  
Enquiring with averted eye,—  
‘This hideous vampire !—can I trace  
Here my Aldona !—could I guess  
’Twas her by those dim haggard eyes ?’  
Ah ! e’en the thought brings torturing pain !  
No,—ne’er the poor recluse will stain

That image bright within thy breast,  
The fair Aldona once impressed."

"E'en I,—forgive, my love,—will own,  
Each time the moon's pale beams are thrown  
Fresh on the Earth,—when then I hear  
Thy voice,—I dread to see thee near:  
I hide behind my tower's cold wall,  
Lest some stray glance on thee should fall  
And find thee changed. Perchance 'tis so,  
And thou some different traits may shew,  
From what thou wast, when, years gone by,  
Brought in that squadron's company  
Within our castle. But, since then,  
Fixed in this bosom, still remain  
The eyes, the look, the mien, the dress,  
Traced in those days of happiness,  
As, closed within its amber tomb,  
The moth's bright hues for ages bloom.  
Better for us, my Alf, to be  
Each what the other joyed to see,—  
What each the other yet shall know,  
But,—not upon this earth below!

Leave to the happy ones alone  
The valley fair. Each frigid stone  
Of this my sad forlorn retreat,  
I love it now, nor wish to quit:  
Enough, to know that thou art near,  
At evening, thy sweet voice to hear:  
Perchance e'en in this gloomy cell,  
Dear Alf, some solace may avail,  
Even for sufferings deep as mine.  
Treasons and death no more be thine,  
Nor horrid burnings,—only here,  
Constant, at early hour, repair.

Oh listen !—On this desert plain,  
Some objects dear might live again ;  
Like ours, thou mightest plant a bower,—  
Thy willows loved, and many a flower  
From our dear valley, here might spring ;  
That stone, thou e'en might'st hither bring ;  
Then from the neighbouring hamlets round,  
At times the children might be found,  
Among our native trees to play ;  
Our native plants, in garland gay.

To twine, and, their light sports among,  
At times repeat some Litvan song.  
My fancy's aid those strains should be,  
To dreams of Litva, and of thee.  
And long, long after many a year,  
My Alf's cold grave those songs should cheer.

But Alf no longer heard,—the shore,  
Desert and waste, he wandered o'er,  
Without desire, or thought, or end ;  
Fevered 'mid frost, he seems to find  
Charm in the desert's dreary scene,  
Solace, for his o'er-laboured brain,  
As there he wildly treads the plain.  
Burdened, oppressed 'mid wintry snows,  
Helmet and mail his hands uncloze ;  
He rends his robe to find relief,  
And frees his breast from all—but grief.

With morning light, his footsteps fall  
Close to the city rampart wall.  
What form is that ?—some shade !—he stays,  
And anxious strains his searching gaze :

The shade still further noiseless passed,  
Gliding along the snow; at last  
It vanished in the trench below,  
Only a voice came—Woe ! woe ! woe !

Alf started at the sound,—in thought  
A moment passed,—then quickly caught  
Its dreadful import,—drew his sword  
On every side stood on his guard.  
He searches round with anxious eye ;  
All desert,—only, sweeping by,  
The wintry wind roars o'er his head,  
The snow flakes on the plain are spread :  
Towards the lone shore his looks are cast ;  
A softness o'er his spirit passed ;  
With slow and trembling steps, once more  
He seeks Aldona's dreary tower.

He looked, and still her form was seen  
From afar, those gloomy bars between.  
“ Good morn,” he cried: “ by night alone  
Long have our souls communion known ;



And now good morn,—an omen sweet !  
After long years the morn with thee to greet.”

ALDONA.

“ I mind not omens,—fare thee well !  
My friend ; the light too much may tell  
If here thy footsteps it betray . . . .  
Cease to persuade,—farewell, away,  
Till evening shades return ; nor power,  
Nor wish have I to leave the tower.”

ALF.

“ The time is past ! Yet hear me speak :  
Some simple flower,—all I now seek !  
Alas ! no flowers may greet thy hand !  
Then from thy robe, or tresses’ band,  
One single thread alone let fall,  
Or fragment of thy chamber wall !

“ I wish, to-day,—not all may see  
To-morrow’s light,—I wish from thee  
Some fresh remembrance to obtain,  
Which yet to-day has newly lain

Upon thy bosom, or, more dear,  
On which has dropped thy latest tear.  
Then will I press it to my heart,  
At the last hour, ere life depart;  
With my last thoughts on it will dwell,  
And take of it a last farewell.  
Sudden and quick my doom comes on ;—  
I perish, thou remain'st alone.  
Ah ! could we but together die,—  
See'st thou, my love, that turret high,  
Near to the city ?—there I'll dwell,—  
This sign to thee my fate shall tell :  
From balcony, at break of day,  
A scarf of black I will display ;  
At evening hour a lamp shall shine  
Within my window. Be it thine  
Ever to watch ; if once should be  
That scarf withdrawn, or thou shouldst see  
That lamp expire before its hour,  
Then close the window of thy tower :  
Perhaps I shall return no more.”

He turned away, and soon was gone ;  
Aldona still hung gazing on  
At that small grating,—morning passed,—  
The evening sun was sinking fast,—  
Still at that window, from afar,  
The folds of her white robe appear,  
Moved by the breeze, and towards the earth  
Her outspread arms are stretching forth.

“ It sinks at last,” said Alf, and shewed  
To Halban, where expiring glowed  
The sun’s last ray ; there had he sat,  
At the tower window desolate,  
His steadfast gaze from earliest dawn,  
Towards sad Aldona’s window borne.

“ Give me mantle and sabre now :  
Farewell, old servant, I must go  
Forth to that tower,—farewell to thee  
For long,—for ever it may be ;  
Yet listen, Halban ! If the dawn,  
To-morrow, see me not return,

Then leave this dwelling. Something still  
These lips must to thine ear reveal :  
How lone am I!—to none on earth  
Could I life's parting accents breathe,  
Save only unto her and thee.  
Again farewell, my Halban,—she  
Will know,—thou shalt that scarf throw down,  
To-morrow, with the dawn, if then . . . .  
But what?—do'st hear?—noise at the gate!"

"Who's there? and what they purpose? state."  
Three times the watchman cried; but no,—  
From voices wild the cry of Woe!  
Alone was heard; 'twas plain the guard  
Could no opposing strength afford.  
From heavy blows the gate falls in;  
Below is heard the rushing din,  
As thro' the lower galleries passed  
A hurrying troop; and now, at last,  
The circling iron stair, that guides  
Where Vallenrod in gloom resides,

Sounds to the tread of armed men,  
Who quickly will the summit gain.  
Alf barred the door, and drew his sword,  
Then reached a goblet from the board:  
Quickly the window's opening sought,—  
— “Be it so”—poured—and drained the draught.  
“Old man!—to thee!”

Halban grew pale,  
A movement made, of no avail,  
To dash the goblet,—paused to hear,—  
Each moment brought the sound more near,—  
He dropped his hands. ’Tis they—they come!

“Old man! do’st fear the approaching doom?  
Why with that lowering brow appear  
So thoughtful?—A full cup is there:  
Mine was drunk out, old man, to thee.”  
Halban in silent agony  
Despairing gazed,——

“No, ’tis too soon,  
I will outlive . . . . e’en thee, my son!

I wish to stay, to close thine eyes,—  
To live, and see thy glory rise,  
Preserved for ages yet unborn;  
Each Litvan village, castle, town,  
I will run o'er, and where not I  
Can reach, my stirring song shall fly :  
The bard to knights in war shall sing;  
Woman, its notes inspiring,  
At home, shall to her children tell :  
And still thy deeds, remembered well,  
In future time shall spirit wake,  
Deep vengeance for our bones to take.”  
Alf, staggering on the window fell,  
Fast streaming tears his anguish tell;  
Long, long, towards that lone tower was cast  
His eager gaze, how short to last !  
As, in that sight so dear, he chose,  
Absorbed, to meet life's final close.  
With Halban then a last embrace  
He took,—a silent long caress,  
With mutual sighs. Now at the bars  
The noise of steel, assailing, jars :

V  
So  
Mine  
Halban in  
Despairing g<sup>2</sup>.

I will outlive . . . . et

“ Ready I am to die,—what more  
Would you now seek ?—perchance to explore  
How well my office I have filled :  
That secret may be soon revealed.  
Look where those perished thousands lie,—  
Where towns in ruins greet thine eye,—  
Where flames o’er all the land ascend !  
Hear you the howling wintry wind ?  
There, ’neath the snows that o’er them sweep,  
Your band’s last starved remnant sleep.  
Hark ! o’er the fragments of their meal, contend  
The famished dogs, and horrid howlings send.

“ ’Tis mine the deed,—how proud how great,  
This hand has dealt the blow of fate !  
With one wide severing stroke alone,  
The Hydra’s many heads swept down ;  
As Samson mighty vengeance took,  
Once nerved his arm, the column shook,  
Brought down the roof and sank beneath.”



Too well their purpose to proclaim,  
They enter, and call Alf by name.

“Traitor! thy head this day must fall  
Beneath the sword: thy sins recall,  
Repent them, and prepare to die.  
This aged chaplain shall supply  
Counsel of holy comfort; haste  
To purify thy soul, nor cast  
One thought on earth, but die resigned.”

With ready hand his sword to find,  
Alf waited their approach;—but now,  
His blanching cheeks more livid grow;  
Scarce, till the window's ledge he gained,  
His bending form its weight sustained.  
Then a fierce look he cast around,  
His mantle tore, and on the ground  
The symbols of the Master's state  
He threw, and trampled 'neath his feet;  
—— With smile of horrible disdain—  
“These are the sins my life that stain.

“Ready I am to die,—what more  
Would you now seek?—perchance to explore  
How well my office I have filled :  
That secret may be soon revealed.  
Look where those perished thousands lie,—  
Where towns in ruins greet thine eye,—  
Where flames o’er all the land ascend !  
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This hand has dealt the blow of fate !  
With one wide severing stroke alone,  
The Hydra’s many heads swept down ;  
As Samson mighty vengeance took,  
Once nerved his arm, the column shook,  
Brought down the roof and sank beneath.”

He spoke,—into the window cast  
One look,—then senseless fell,—yet passed

In time, a movement, to throw down  
The lamp, from where its light had shone ;  
Three times it circled round, then stayed  
At last, where Konrad's head was laid ;  
The floating match still burnt within,  
But faint and fainter now was seen ;  
Then, as tho' sign it gave of death,  
A last bright flame shot from beneath ;  
Its transient glare just beamed to shew  
Alf's glazed eye, —then sunk the glow.

A piercing shriek of fearful power  
That moment rent the distant tower,  
Sudden and shrill.—Ask ye whose breast  
Its pang of suffering there expressed ?  
That cry its source proclaimed too well ;  
Nor listener's ear need fear, again  
To catch that thrilling voice of pain :—  
That sound tolled out life's parting knell.

So, the harp's chord will sudden break,  
When hand too rude its tone would wake ;

It sounds,—but to its opening song,  
Only some notes confused belong:  
We ne'er may hope the end to hear.

So may my song no more declare.  
If of Aldona's fate, there rest  
Yet more to tell,—'tis mid the blest,  
For angels their celestial strains to bring,  
Or listener's feeling soul unto himself to sing.



## NOTES.



## NOTES.

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PAGE 9.

*"From Marienburg's high tower . . . ."*

Marienburg, a fortified city, formerly the capital of the Teutonic Knights, in the time of Kazimir Jagiellon, was united to the republic of Poland ; afterwards it was given in pledge to the Margraves of Brandenburg, and later came into the power of the kings of Prussia. In the vaults of the castle were the tombs of the Grand-Masters, some of which are preserved to this day. *Voigt*, professor at Königsburg, published, some years since, a history of Marienburg ; an important work for the histories of Prussia and Lithuania.

PAGE 9.

*"The Cross . . . . and Sword."*

The insignia of the Grand-Master's office.



## PAGE 17.

*"Great talisman of the immortal mind  
That thus irrational brute force can bind."*

The countenance of man, if it glow with the expression of power and intelligence, is said to produce a wonderful effect even upon wild animals. In illustration of this, we extract the following paragraph from "Capt. Head's Journey across the Pampas."

"I will venture to relate a circumstance which a man sincerely assured me had happened to him in South America.

"He was trying to shoot some wild ducks, and, in order to approach them unperceived, he put the corner of his poncho (which is a sort of long narrow blanket) over his head, and crawling along the ground upon his hands and knees, the poncho not only covering his body, but trailing along the ground behind him. As he was thus creeping by a large bush of reeds, he heard a loud noise, and felt something heavy strike his feet, and, instantly jumping up, he saw, to his astonishment, a large lion actually standing on his poncho; and perhaps the animal was equally astonished to find himself in the immediate presence of so athletic a man!

"The man told me he was unwilling to fire, as his gun was loaded with very small shot, and he, therefore, remained motionless, the lion standing on his poncho for many seconds; at last the creature turned his head, and, walking very slowly away about ten yards, he stopped and turned again. The man still maintained his ground, upon which the lion tacitly acknowledged his supremacy, and walked off."

## PAGE 20.

"*The Prior Chief*" (or the Great Prior).

The officer next in authority to the Grand-Master.

## PAGE 22.

"*A pious maid unknown.*"

The chronicles of those times contain notice of a peasant maiden, who arrived at Marienburg, and desired to be shut up in a solitary cell, where she ended her days. Her grave was celebrated for miracles.

## PAGE 26.

"*That voice prophetic shall decide*  
*The chapter's choice . . . .*"

At the time of the Election, if the opinions were divided or uncertain, some similar circumstance, taken as an augury, would influence the decision of the chapter. Thus *Vinrych Kniprode* gained all the voices in his favour, because some of the brothers heard, as if from the tombs of the Grand-Masters, a cry three times repeated: *Vinrice! Ordo laborat*,—*Vinrych*, the Order is in danger.

## PAGE 34.

"*Sventorog Castle.*"

The castle of Vilna, in which was formerly kept up the sacred fire.

## PAGE 52.

*"Rejoice ye in the Lord."*

The signal, at the feasts of the Order, in those times.

## PAGE 62.

*"The song of the Vajdelote."*

See the poems of Mickiewicz, vol. i., where is described a similar event at the installation, as Grand-Master, of Dusener von Arfberg.

## PAGE 62.

*"The Maiden of the Plague stands forth to sight."*

The common people in Lithuania represent the blast of pestilence, under the form of a maiden, whose appearance, described here, according to popular tradition, precedes any dreadful disease. I will quote, in substance at least—a ballad, known, in former times in Lithuania.

"The maiden of the plague appeared in the village, and, as usual, sliding her hand in at the door or window, and waving a bloody handkerchief, spread death throughout the dwelling. The inhabitants shut themselves up closely; but hunger and other necessities, shortly obliged them to neglect such means of precaution; all then expected death.

"A certain man of the lesser nobility, although sufficiently provided with provisions, and able much longer to have maintained himself besieged in that frightful manner, resolved, nevertheless, to sacrifice himself for the good of his neighbours; he took a Sigismundean sabre, on which was inscribed *the name*

of *Jesus and the Virgin Mary*, and, thus armed, he opened his window.

"This man, with one blow, struck off the hand of the Phantom, and got possession of the handkerchief. He died,—indeed his whole family died ; but from that time the blast of the pestilence has never again been known in the village." That handkerchief was said to be still preserved in the church of some small town, the name of which I do not remember. In the East, before the appearance of the plague, a phantom is said to show itself, with the wings of a bat, and with its fingers pointing to those fated to die. It would appear that the popular imagination, in similar figures, seeks to represent the secret presentiment, and strange terror which is observed to precede any great calamity or death, and in which not only particular persons, but often whole nations have participated. Thus, in Greece, was foreboded the long continuance and dreadful effects of the Peloponnesian war ; in the Roman Empire, the fall of the monarchy ; in America, the arrival of the Spaniards.

PAGE 73.

*"Walter, my name."*

Walter von Stadion, a German knight, carried into slavery by the Lithuanians, espoused the daughter of Kiejstut, and with her departed secretly from Lithuania.

It often happened, that Prussian and Lithuanian children, taken away, and educated in Germany, returned to their country, and became the most deadly enemies of the Germans. Such, as recorded in the annals of the Order, was the Prussian, Herkus Monte.

PAGE 115.

“ *War . . . .* ”

The picture of this war is drawn from history.

PAGE 124.

“ *The secret Tribunal.* ”

In the middle ages, when powerful Dukes and Barons committed innumerable crimes; when the power of the ordinary tribunals was too weak to repress them, there assembled a secret society, the members of which, unknown to each other, obliged themselves by an oath to punish the guilty, not suffering to escape even their own friends or kindred. As soon as the secret Judges had pronounced the sentence of death, they acquainted the guilty person of it, by calling under his window, or somewhere else in his presence, the word, *Weh!* (*Woe!*) That word three times repeated was a warning; whoever heard it prepared himself for death, which would infallibly come, and at an unexpected moment, from some unknown hand. The secret tribunal is still called (*Vemgericht*) or Westphalian.

It is difficult to guess when it first originated; according to some it was established by Charlemagne.

Useful at first, it afterwards gave occasion to many abuses, and the governments were obliged to act severely towards the judges themselves, until, at last, the institution was entirely abolished.

---

We have called our tale historical, because the characters of the persons acting therein, and all the most important events mentioned in the narration, are drawn from history. The Chronicles of those times, in broken and scattered writings, must frequently be supplied by conjectures, in order from them to make up an entire history.

Although, in the deeds of Vallenrod, we have permitted ourselves these conjectures, we still hope to justify their conformity with truth. According to the Chronicles, Konrad Vallenrod was not descended from the noble German race of Vallenrod, although he gave himself out as a member of it. He is said to be rather the son of some illegitimate union. The Chronicle of Koningsburg, (in the Vallenrod Library) declares, "Er war ein Pfaffenkind" (he was the child of a priest).

Of the character of this extraordinary man we read different and contradictory accounts.

The greater part of the writers accuse him of pride, cruelty, and drunkenness, severity towards his dependents—very little zeal for the faith, and even an aversion from spiritual affairs. Er war ein rechter Leuteschinder,—*he was a perfect executioner of mankind.* (Chronicle of the Wallenrod Library)—Nach Krieg, Zank und Hader hat sein Hertzimmer gestanden, und ob er gleich ein Gott-ergebener Mensch von Wegen seines Ordens seyn sollte, doch ist er allen frommen Geistlichen Menschen Gräuel gewesen. *His heart was always bent upon war, strife and quarrels, and although by virtue of his order he should have been a person devoted to God, yet he became a horror and detestation to all pious persons.* (David Lucas) Er regierte nicht lang, denn Gott plagte ihn inwendig mit dem laufenden Feuer. *He did not reign long, for God tormented him inwardly with a consuming fire.*

On the other hand, there are writers of that time, who

ascribe to him, magnanimity, courage, dignity, and strength of character ; and indeed, without some rare qualities, he could not have maintained his power, amidst the disorder and the defeats which he brought upon the Order. Let us now review the career of Vallenrod. When he took the command of the Order, the time appeared opportune for making war upon Lithuania, for Vitold had promised himself to lead the Germans to Vilna, and supply them liberally with succours. Vallenrod, nevertheless, procrastinated the war, and what is worse, he sent away Vitold, and so inconsiderately confided in him, that, that prince, having secretly reconciled himself with Jagiellon, not only departed from Prussia, but, on the road, entering the German castles as a friend, burned them, and put the garrisons to the sword.

In such an unlooked-for change of circumstances it was proper either to abandon the war, or to enter upon it in a very cautious manner.

The Grand Master proclaimed a crusade, spent the treasures of the Order (5,000,000 marks,—about one million Hungarian florins, an enormous sum at that time) in preparations for his passage into Lithuania. He might have seized upon Vilna, had he not wasted the time in feasting and waiting for succours.

The autumn came on: Vallenrod having kept the army in a state of inactivity, retreated in the greatest disorder back to Prussia. The Chroniclers, and later historians are unable to guess the reason for such a sudden return, not finding in the circumstances of the times any sufficient cause for it. Some ascribe the flight of Vallenrod to a disordered intellect.

All that we have mentioned of contradictory in the character and career of our hero, is at once explained, if we admit that he was a Lithuanian, and that he entered the Order only

to take revenge upon it. In fact his government was a most fatal blow to the power of the Teutons. We assume that Vallenrod was that same Walter Stadion, abridging only by a few years the time elapsed, between the departure of Walter from Lithuania, and the appearance of Konrad in Marienburg.

Walter died in 1394. His death was sudden : strange events are said to have accompanied his decease. Er starb—says the Chronicle—in Raserey, ohne letzte Oehlung, ohne Priestersegen. Kurtz vor seinem Tode wütheten Stürme Regengüsse, Wasserfluthen ; die Weichsel und die Nogat durchbrachen ihre Dämme . . . . . hingegen wühlten die Gewässer sich eine neue Tiefe, da, wo jetzt Pillau steht. *He died insane, without extreme unction, without a priest's blessing. A short time before his death there raged storms, torrents of rain and inundations. The Vistula and the Nogat broke their banks . . . . . on the other hand the waters formed for themselves a new channel at the place where Pillau stands.* Halban or, as the recording Doctor calls him, Leander von Albanus, a monk, was the only, and inseparable companion of Vallenrod.

Although he professed piety, he was, according to the Chronicler, a heretic, a pagan, and probably a magician. There are no certain accounts of Halban's death. Some write that he drowned himself, others that he departed in a mysterious manner, or that he was carried off by the devil. We have quoted the Chronicle, for the most part from a work of Kotzebue. *Preussens Geschichte, Belege und Erläuterungen. The history of Prussia, notes and illustrations.* Hartnack, who calls Vallenrod a madman, gives but a very short notice of him.



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